> **"Very well done.**
> It represents fairly, and with sufficient accuracy, the kind of critical position which is now widely held, and should be generally known."
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A GUIDEBOOK TO THE BIBLE

By
ALICE PARMELEE

With a Foreword by
WILLIAM NEIL, M.A., B.D., Ph.D
University of Nottingham

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The publishers gratefully acknowledge the courtesy of the author and of her American publishers, Harper & Brothers, New York, for kind permission to prepare this "Teach Yourself" book from Miss Parmelee's larger work issued in America under the same title.

FOREWORD

The Bible is the most fascinating book in the world—but it is also in some ways the most difficult to read. It is difficult because most of us try to read it in the impossibly small print and irritating chapter and verse divisions of the Authorised Version, which to complete our perplexity speaks to us in an archaic tongue over three hundred years old.

But even if we have the good sense to buy a modern translation,[1] unless we have been brought up in a kind of atmosphere which is increasingly uncommon to-day, we still find ourselves in a world of unfamiliar thought-forms and ideas. We are confused by the Bible's contradictions, irritated by its *naïveté*, bored by its irrelevances, almost as much as we are moved by the depth of its insights and stirred by its pageant of humanity and history.

If we are students we set about striking a path through the thicket by invoking the aid of commentaries, and call to our assistance the expert guidance of textual critics, archaeologists, and theologians.

But if, as is more likely, we are simply inquiring laymen with busy lives and varied interests, where can we find an "Open Sesame!" which will give us all this in small compass and simple language? How can we make the Bible come alive?

Miss Parmelee's book supplies the answer. It is up to date, accurate, illuminating, and very readable. It puts at our disposal the fruits of the New Learning which has revolutionised our whole approach to the Bible since our grandfathers' day, and has made possible for our generation a deeper understanding of the real nature and value of the Scriptures than ever before.

In this book we are shown how the Old Testament grew out of the life-blood of the Hebrew people: not as a record of their private meditations, but a confession of their faith wrung from them in the hurly-burly of wars, disasters, famines, victories, and defeats; a story of an unfolding purpose studded with much glory and some dishonour; a panorama of human life and hopes on a midget stage amid the rise and fall of empires, and the loves and hates of monarchs and men.

We see the Old Testament as the story of a nation with a destiny which it could not fulfil, but a nation which even in its hour of deepest impotence never lost the hope that one day justice and truth would win the day, and that by the intervention of the Most High his power would fill men with new life and call them to deeper and wider obedience.

---

[1] e.g., for the Old Testament, the translation by Moffatt or Knox; for the New Testament, J. B. Phillips or the New English Bible.

And the New Testament, we are shown, is the record of men who claimed that all that had now begun to happen. The battle over evil, disease, and death had in fact been won. Mankind, freed from restraints of nationalism and bigotry, was now offered a new and exhilarating fellowship transcending all barriers of race, class, and tongue. In short, we see the Bible not as a haphazard collection of literary oddments, nor yet as a storehouse of accurate scientific information, much less as a repository of legend and superstition, but as the story of the creation of a People of God, destined to become a world-wide community bound in loyalty and service to Jesus Christ as Lord.

How that people was educated to its vocation; how it gathered together its title deeds; how it modified its views and changed its plans; how its understanding grew; and how we to-day, in so far as we accept the Biblical view of life as our own, can enter into our heritage: this is the substance of what this book has to tell.

WILLIAM NEIL

CONTENTS

PART I: THE OLD TESTAMENT

CHAPTER PAGE
1. UNRAVELLING THE OLD TESTAMENT: The Search for Origins 3
2. THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE BOOK: The Hebrews and their Neighbours 7
3. THE OLDEST WRITINGS IN THE BIBLE: Songs and Poetry 12
4. THE FATHER OF HISTORY: The Founding of the Kingdom 16
5. THE EPIC OF ISRAEL: The J Narrative . . 18
6. A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ISRAEL: The E Narrative 21
7. THE FIRST BOOK OF PROPHECY: Amos . . 25
8. THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROPHECY: Hosea, Isaiah, Micah 29
9. THE BOOK FOUND IN THE TEMPLE: Deuteronomy 34
10. EDITING ISRAEL'S HISTORY: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings 36
11. THE PROPHET TO A DOOMED NATION: Jeremiah 40
12. WRITTEN IN EXILE: Ezekiel and the Holiness Code 43
13. THE GREATEST OF THE HEBREWS: Second Isaiah . 47
14. THE CONSTITUTION OF A SPIRITUAL COMMONWEALTH: The Priestly Code 52
15. THE MEMOIRS OF A STATESMAN: Nehemiah . . 55
16. BREAKING DOWN RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVENESS: Jonah and Ruth 58
17. FIRST EDITIONS OF THE BIBLE: The Law and the Prophets 61
18. AN OLD TESTAMENT MASTERPIECE: Job . . 65
19. WISE MEN OF ISRAEL: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes . 69
20. ISRAEL'S GOLDEN TREASURY: Psalms . . . 71
21. THE LITERARY HARVEST OF A CENTURY: Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Song of Solomon, Daniel, Esther 75

CHAPTER PAGE
22. THE BOOKS THAT WERE LEFT OUT: The Apocrypha 79
23. THE PORTABLE FATHERLAND OF THE JEWS: The Hebrew Scriptures 84

PART II: THE NEW TESTAMENT

24. THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA: Christianity Emerges . 89
25. SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS: Forty Years of the Oral Gospel 93
26. THE OLDEST GOSPEL: The Gospel of Mark . . 98
27. A GOSPEL FOR THE EARLY CHURCH: The Gospel of Matthew 102
28. LUKE'S TWO-VOLUME HISTORY: The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles . . . 105
29. THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM: The Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke Viewed Together . . . 109
30. CHRIST'S INTERPRETER TO THE GREEK WORLD: The Gospel and Epistles of John 113
31. PAUL'S LEGACY TO CHRISTIANITY: The Epistles of Paul 116
32. DEFENDING THE FAITH: Hebrews, I Peter, James, Jude, II Peter 124
33. CHRISTIANITY TRIUMPHANT: The Revelation of John 128
34. FORMING THE NEW TESTAMENT: The Canon . . 133

PART III: THE BIBLE THROUGH THE CENTURIES

35. BIBLES COPIED BY HAND: Rolls and Codices . 139
36. TRANSLATING THE BIBLE: St. Jerome's Vulgate and Other Versions 143
37. THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE: Caedmon, Bede, Wycliffe's Bible 147
38. THE FATHER OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE: William Tyndale 150
39. THE LINEAGE OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE: Six Important Bibles 155
40. THE AUTHORISED VERSION OF 1611 . . . 158

CHAPTER PAGE
41. THE DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS: Codices and Palimpsests 160
42. TRANSLATING CONTINUES: The Revised and Other Versions 163
43. BURIED TREASURE: New Bible Discoveries . . 166
44. THE BIBLE TO-DAY: A Living Book . . . 172
Bible Readings 175
INDEX 179

CHAPTER ONE

UNRAVELLING THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Search for Origins

How shall I catalogue it? wondered a young librarian as she opened the Bible. On her index card was space for the author's name and the publication date. What facts could she find to record? Well she might wonder, though the volume itself looks ordinary enough in its modern dress of printed paper bound in black cloth. Standing on a shelf among modern novels, schoolbooks, and biographies, the Bible usually seems just a little more solemn and a little less interesting than they. Could it be printed and bound to show at a glance what an extraordinary book it is? Doubtless this is impossible, but people have tried to do it, nevertheless, as is shown by the treasured volumes kept to-day under glass in libraries and museums. Kings have had the Bible bound between gold covers set with precious stones. Artists have adorned its pages with delicate illuminations of breath-taking beauty. Scribes have literally dipped their pens in liquid gold and written its words on purple-stained vellum. But the majesty and truth and incomparable power of the Bible still defy visible expression. As the young librarian knew, there is far more here than meets the eye. The little black cloth volume is a disguise indeed.

In the first place, the Bible is not a single book at all. It is divided into two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. But even the Old Testament is not a single book. From Genesis to Malachi it contains thirty-nine books, some of which, like Ruth or Haggai, are only a few pages long, while others, like Genesis and Psalms, are nearly as long as an average book.

Is this little library of the Old Testament similar to a one-volume edition of Shakespeare and does it contain the collected works of a single author? Some people believe that this is indeed the case and that God Himself is the actual Author of each word in the thirty-nine books. This theory raises difficulties. We cannot believe that the men who wrote the actual words were as unthinking as a teletype mechanically spelling out a message. The authors left too much of their own personalities on every page for us to believe that they were automatons when they wrote the Bible. The background of their days, their different ideas about God, their individual responses to life—all these coloured their words and sometimes, it must be admitted, obscured their message. Filled as the Bible is with the infinite variety of human life, we yet find amid its many-coloured hues the pure white light of a revelation from God. On some pages this light shines brighter for us than on others, perhaps because our understanding of spiritual things is limited by our personal experience. No doubt also, to some Bible writers there was granted deeper spiritual insight than to others, and some were more willing channels of divine revelation. It seems reasonable then to suppose that God used not only the pens of people like ourselves to spell out His message, but that He also used their minds, their experiences, and their personalities. With the clearest words at his command each writer put down as much of the divine message as he was able to understand. In reading the Bible we are always aware of its two poles: the human and the divine. We see men's groping efforts to find God, but we also see God's revelation of Himself to men. A New Testament writer summed it up in a phrase: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets . . ." (Hebrews 1. 1).

No doubt it was their divine quality which caused the thirty-nine books to be chosen from the entire body of Hebrew literature and at length brought together between the covers of one book. Certainly it is the human aspect of the books that gives them their fascinating variety. Here are poems and legends, songs and folklore, statistics and genealogies, orations, hymns, proverbs, and novels. The books are written in many moods and in many styles. The cadences and the rhythm of the sentences change from book to book and sometimes even within one book. There can be no question about it that the Old Testament is the work of many authors. It was doubtless in the process of being written during a period of a thousand years.

If it is impossible in cataloguing the Old Testament to give the name of its author because there was not one but many, or the date of its publication because this was gradual, extending over many centuries, we can perhaps catalogue the Old Testament book by book. Here again we run into difficulties. We have the titles, all thirty-nine of them, and, though they are not the original titles, they will do very well for our purpose. It is with the authors' names that our problem begins, for we find no title pages and few clear statements of authorship. In the days when every word of the Bible was thought to be from God few people cared to discover who had written the various books. Moreover, ancient peoples did not share our curiosity about authors. Our first question about a book is: Who wrote it? In Old Testament days all this was different. Authors apparently did not bother to sign their own work and few people seem to have asked: Who wrote it? As for copying, that was freely done without regard to quotation marks, which had not been invented, nor copyrights, which did not exist. To-day what is considered literary theft was then really a high literary compliment, for who would laboriously copy another's work by hand unless he considered it to be of great merit? All this shows why cataloguing the Old Testament books is not a simple matter of listing, but becomes a complicated puzzle.

Traditions grew up about the authors of the thirty-nine books. Some of these traditions were probably founded on actual fact. The names of such prophets as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah may have become attached to their works at such an early date that these traditions of authorship are fairly reliable. Others seem less credible. Moses was supposed to be the author of the five famous books with which the Old Testament opens. If we read the first chapters of Genesis carefully we shall note a strange fact. Here are two stories of creation, but they are two different stories! Did one man write both? In the last chapter of Deuteronomy we read the story of the death of Moses and we ask ourselves: "Did Moses write about his own death?"

We notice, moreover, that the five books are richly varied in content. There are ballads and laws, census lists and lyric poetry? Could Moses have been a master of so many literary forms? When the truth begins to dawn on us, the whole theory that Moses was the author of the first five books collapses like a house of cards, and we see that this great Pentateuch must be the work of many men. We begin to question also the theory that David was the author of the Book of Psalms and that Solomon composed Proverbs. Having discarded the old theories, we shall find evidence that hardly a single book as it now stands in the Old Testament was written by one person. Even in such books as Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah we shall discover additions by later hands.

Each book is a marvellously complex creation into whose making went the craftsmanship, insight, and genius of many men. It is fascinating to note where changes in style and differences in ideas occur and to realise that here one man must have put down his pen and another probably begun to write. There are times when we wish ancient authors had not copied so freely from other writers and that editors and redactors had not mixed so many new ideas with the original texts. We often feel that if we could get back to the original documents we would be closer to a true understanding of God's message to men. But this is probably not so. All who worked on these books were trying to make God's message clear. The literary historian and the textual critic may lament the ancient documents ploughed under when the Old Testament books were put in final shape. For those who love the heritage of Israel the contributions of all her prophets, writers, and editors are valuable.

The Old Testament is like an ancient city where men have lived for centuries. Studying the books to discover their various authors is like excavating an old city. Successive layers of debris, rubble, and broken pottery are dug up, each layer showing to those who understand such evidence the history and life of its own period. In much the same way, unravelling the books of the Old Testament brings fascinating information to light. It helps us to see the steps in Israel's religious progress from the crude superstitions of her earliest days to the sublime visions of her great prophets. Most important of all, in the process of unearthing the origins of the Bible its people begin to live for us as they never did before and its message becomes real to us.

We shall make our way back through more than three thousand years to the days when the oldest things in our Bible were composed, and we shall hunt for the first writings, for their authors, and for the story of how the books came into being. This is a difficult search and we shall need to follow every possible clue. Language experts, archaeologists, historians, theologians, and scholars supply us with many a lead in our hunt and there are plenty of clues to be found in the pages of the Old Testament itself.

From first to last this library of thirty-nine books contains the story of a great people. Here are their moments of exaltation, their royal splendours, their dark wrongs, the ringing words of their prophets, the imperishable songs of their poets. In unravelling the Old Testament our first clue is the people themselves out of whose experiences these amazing books came. If we can discover who the people were and what made them different from all other ancient peoples, we shall be well on our way to understanding the Book which is their highest creative achievement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE BOOK

The Hebrews and their Neighbours

The people who gave us the Old Testament join the pageant of history under the leadership of Moses, and from then on we can trace their fortunes. Bitter conflicts with the Canaanites and Philistines marked the years of their settlement in Palestine and the formation of their little kingdom under Saul and David. Solomon reigned unwisely and his successor saw a fatal division split the kingdom into North and South. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Judah, the Southern Kingdom, survived as an independent nation only until 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was captured and destroyed and its people led captive to Babylon. This was the beginning of the dispersion of the Jews which has been a factor in world history until the present day. At length some of them returned to Palestine and rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem in 516 B.C., but they were henceforth a subject people under the domination of some world power, first Persia, later Greece, and then Rome.

These people have been given various names: Hebrews, Israelites, and Jews. They came originally from the vast reaches of the Arabian desert, the nursery of the great Semitic race. The Hebrews belonged to this virile race and were related to such other Semites as the Canaanites and the Phoenicians. Long before the time of Moses, migrating bands of Hebrews must have come out of the desert with their wives and children searching for better pastures for their flocks, and fields where they might plant crops. The ancient world seems to have been alive with migrating tribes seeking to escape from the hardships of the desert. The stories of the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, paint a picture of the lives of these nomad tribes in the dimly known centuries before their real history began.

The fertile lands they coveted stretched in a giant crescent from the Euphrates to the Nile. Green pastures and well-watered farming country must have seemed a veritable paradise to eyes accustomed to the bare expanse of desert. But the nomads found the green lands already occupied. The Egyptians, Akkadians, Hittites, Babylonians, Phoenicians, and

Canaanites, all well-organised and powerful peoples, controlled the fertile lands. Though the nomads made many an armed attack they could not overthrow the empires of antiquity. Some of the Hebrews must have settled down in small family or tribal groups within the boundaries of the great powers.

From the peoples of the Tigris-Euphrates region among whom the Hebrews probably lived they learned many things, and Genesis is full of memories of those days. In the story of Adam and Eve we read that "a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became into four heads . . . and the fourth river is Euphrates." Eden itself, then, was located in fertile country, not in the desert cradle of the race. An old Babylonian legend forms the basis of the story of Noah and the flood. Abraham is said to have come from the city of Ur not far from the place where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers join before they flow into the Persian Gulf. Moreover, scholars tell us that some of the laws in Deuteronomy are similar to laws in the famous code of Hammurabi of about 1690 B.C. Centuries passed before these stories and laws and memories were written down in the form in which we now read them in the Bible, but the Hebrews never forgot one of their first contacts with a civilisation higher than their own. Of all the streams that flowed into the Bible one of the most ancient is the stream of legend, myth, law, and remembered experience that issued from Babylonia.

From time to time groups of Hebrews migrated to the banks of the Nile. They may have gone as traders bringing goods along the caravan routes that linked the Euphrates to the Nile. Many were probably driven to Egypt by famine, as were the brothers of Joseph. In Egypt the Hebrews gazed with awe at the mighty pyramids, already centuries old. They talked in the market places with men who in agriculture and government, in building and art, in morality and religion had achieved the highest civilisation yet known.

It was the Egyptians who first learned how to cut the stem or pith of the papyrus reed into thin strips and paste them together to make a sheet of paper. Ink they manufactured from soot mixed with gum and water. They cut their pens from split reeds. As for writing itself, the Egyptians experimented with pictures and signs until at last, long before 3000 B.C., they devised the oldest alphabet in the world. The Egyptian scribe, however, preferred to write with his pictures and signs and it remained for another people to develop the alphabet.

Under Moses the real history of the Hebrews began. Curiously enough, we are not sure exactly when this happened.

Scholars differ in their calculations of when Moses lived by as much as six hundred years. Many historians think that Rameses II, who died about 1225 B.C., was the Pharaoh who oppressed the Hebrews. Tentatively we date the Exodus about 1250 B.C., remembering that this date is surrounded with uncertainty and may have to be revised if future discoveries bring to light new evidence to contradict it. Whenever he lived, Moses was one of the greatest of the Hebrews. He was their liberator, their lawgiver, and, most important of all, he was the man who first taught them that they were God's people. In this idea lay the seed of Israel's great religious development. Tradition says Moses was brought up by an Egyptian princess and educated in the royal household. His name is the Egyptian word for "son" and it occurs frequently on Egyptian tombs and in the names of some of the Pharaohs like Thutmose. Egyptian influence must have permeated Moses' thinking and through him exercised a strong influence upon Israel's early life.

The Euphrates and the Nile flow through the Bible, depositing on its pages some of the fruits of their civilisations. During the earliest years of Hebrew history and indeed throughout the centuries while the Old Testament was being written, there was constant influence upon the Hebrews from all her neighbours. From the Canaanites, whom they found living in Palestine and among whom they settled, the Hebrews learned how to plant vineyards and raise crops. They learned from them many of the arts and crafts of both peace and war and they even adopted part of the Canaanite religion. The local Canaanite gods of agriculture were called Baalim. In order to assure the fertility of their lands the Hebrews worshipped the local Baal with pagan rites on the "high place" until the prophets taught them that Yahweh was the only God.

Most important, perhaps, of all they learned from others was the alphabet. Though their method of writing came from the Egyptians, the Hebrews did not derive their alphabet from Egyptian hieroglyphic or hieratic writing but from the Canaanite-Phoenician alphabet which they found in use in Palestine when they arrived. The Hebrews adopted the Canaanite-Phoenician alphabet and used it when they wrote the Old Testament. The seafaring Phoenicians carried this alphabet to the shores of Greece, little realising that it was the most valuable part of their cargoes. The Greeks breathed life into its consonants by devising vowels. The Romans, Arabs, and Indians all made use of this alphabet, and to-day it is the alphabet of our typewriters and printing presses.

Scholars believe that even the name which the Hebrews used for their God was borrowed from a foreign people. From the time of Moses many of the Hebrews called their God Yahweh. This name seems to have been originally the name of the god of the Kenites, a tribe living in Midian, south of the Dead Sea. Here Moses found refuge when he was forced to flee from Egypt, and here he married one of the Kenite women. He must have learned the name Yahweh from the Kenites, and when he returned to his people in Egypt he taught them that God's name was Yahweh.

What did the word "Yahweh" originally mean to the Hebrews? Possibly its meaning was derived from the verb "to be". This seems to be one aspect of the meaning of Yahweh in the well-known story of the burning bush in the third chapter of Exodus, when God revealed His name to Moses. But the recently deciphered Ras Shamra tablets throw new light on the derivation of Yahweh and indicate that it may come from the same root as the word "to speak".[1] The idea of God speaking to them runs like a golden thread through all the records of Israel's religion. Yahweh spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. After Moses had taught the Hebrews that Yahweh had chosen them to be His people, they always thought of Him as One who spoke to them. Their deepest concern was to hear His words and learn His will. Finally, there arose among them prophets through whom the Lord spoke to His people.

Fascinating as it is to discover in Hebrew life, thought, and literature the influences of foreign peoples, we shall not find in these the clue to the greatness of the Bible. The things Israel borrowed from Egypt and Babylonia, Canaan and Phoenicia were not what really mattered. Myths and laws, customs and skills, ways of thinking and ways of worshipping: all these were the common denominators of an ancient international civilisation. To explain the uniqueness of the Bible we shall have to find what it was that Israel did not share with her neighbours, what it was that she alone possessed.

There was granted to Israel as to no other ancient people to love and serve and understand her God. Power, conquest, and art were the gifts other nations received. Israel was given spiritual things. Her great men were neither administrators and builders like the mighty Pharaohs, nor conquerors like the kings of Assyria, but prophets who spoke the words of God. Empire and wealth were not for Israel. Her true glory lay in her fellowship with God. This was deep and rich and enduring. Her high adventures, her bitter failures, her sorrows, her songs became factors in her growing understanding of God. The things she borrowed from others: Babylonian myths, Egyptian ideas, Canaanite ritual, all these she purified of their crude paganism and recreated afresh to the glory of God. She fashioned her literature out of the durable fabric of her religion and embroidered it with the brightly coloured pattern of her life. In all the events of her history Israel saw the hand of God. History was to her "the mighty acts of the Lord". In words that live today she proclaimed her certainty that Israel belonged to Yahweh, the God of the whole world. She learned to know Him as a God of justice and love who requires righteousness of men. In this lay the splendour of Israel and her claim to greatness.

Israel learned these tremendous truths in the vanished centuries while she was writing the Old Testament. From its pages there seems to blow a wind from God, and on the wind we hear that ancient cry in which she proclaimed her faith:

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.
>
> DEUTERONOMY 6. 4

The wind still brings us the voice of the Law and the voices of the prophets. We hear the command which still, after twenty-five centuries, demands our obedience:

> Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
>
> LEVITICUS 19. 18

The prophets continue to challenge us with their question:

> What doth the Lord require of thee?
>
> MICAH 6. 8

And we still humbly try to shape our lives by kindness, mercy, and justice.

The centuries have proved that Israel was endowed with extraordinary spiritual insight. The answers she found to many of life's problems remain valid answers, and the books in which she bequeathed us her heritage surpass all ancient literatures in moral and spiritual grandeur. Weighed on the scales, the Old Testament outbalances a pyramid, an alphabet, and countless ancient armies.

---

[1] See Raymond A. Bowman, "Yahweh the Speaker", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. III, No. 1 (1944).

CHAPTER THREE

THE OLDEST WRITINGS IN THE BIBLE

Songs and Poetry

We shall not find the oldest writings of the Bible conveniently grouped together in the beginning of Genesis, for the editors of the Old Testament books were not interested in chronological development. The surviving remains of the earliest Hebrew literature are like fossils in a rock, imbedded in much later writings.

One of these literary fossils is Miriam's Song of Victory at the Red Sea. If the authorities who date the Exodus about 1200 B.C. are correct, this brief song must come from that time. The tribes in Egypt had escaped from bondage only to be pursued by Pharaoh's army. In panic the Hebrews fled on foot over the exposed sea or lake bottom. Thundering behind them came the Egyptian chariots. But the chariot wheels stuck in the moist, soft sand and the returning waters drowned the Egyptian army. As if by a miracle the Hebrews were saved. Miriam snatched up a timbrel and led a wildly cheering crowd of women in a dance of victory. As they danced they shouted:

> Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
> The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
>
> Exodus 15. 21

This was a turning point in Israel's history. From then on the Hebrews knew that Yahweh was their God and that they were His people. The moment of their great deliverance was the moment when their religion came alive. No one present could forget the excitement of the hour, and the song itself became a part of their faith in Yahweh's power to help them. When those who had been children on that day became grandfathers they taught their grandchildren the words of the song. In this way the oldest hymn to God in the Old Testament was preserved. This brief song composed by Miriam rings up the curtain on Israel's religion and prepares for the first act at Mount Sinai when the tribes entered into a covenant with Yahweh and pledged their allegiance to the God who had delivered them.

When the Hebrews entered the Promised Land of Canaan, they found it inhabited by a people with a far higher civilisation than their own. As we have seen, the Canaanites possessed a well-developed system of writing. They were farmers and merchants, scholars and soldiers. The Hebrews found that fortified cities blocked their invasion. Armies equipped with iron weapons fought against them. Horse-drawn chariots, ancestors of the modern tank, terrified the Hebrew infantry. It required daring to enter the struggle at all. Morale played a decisive part. The Hebrews, encouraged by their experience at the Red Sea and by the teachings of Moses, believed that their enemies were Yahweh's enemies and that He would fight for them. They constructed a wooden box called the Ark and in this they believed that the Lord was present. They carried the Ark into battle singing:

> Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered;
> And let them that hate thee flee before thee.
>
> Numbers 10. 35

When they brought the Ark back to their camp they chanted:

> Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.
>
> Numbers 10. 36

The invasion and conquest of Palestine was a prolonged struggle lasting possibly for several centuries. Though fighting continued during the period of the rulers called "Judges", the Hebrews began to settle down, building houses of mud or sun-dried brick like those of their Canaanite neighbours. They tilled the soil and planted crops. They engaged in simple manufacture and commerce. Except in the south where shepherds grazed their flocks on the Judean hills, the Hebrews exchanged the ways of desert nomads for the life of a settled people. Warfare, however, constantly interrupted their lives. One episode in the wars against the Canaanites is celebrated in the great Ode of Deborah. Though this Ode must have been composed in the troubled years between 1200 and 1000 B.C., it is one of the finest songs in Hebrew literature.

Ranged against the Israelites was the Canaanite army led by Sisera. At Megiddo they fought a battle in which, according to the Ode, more than Israelites fought against the Canaanites.

> They fought from heaven;
> The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
>
> Judges 5. 20

A sudden rain storm swelled the river Kishon into a raging torrent, and Sisera's chariots and horsemen became mired. Seeing the battle going against him, Sisera fled and sought refuge in the tent of a Kenite woman named Jael. She received him with desert hospitality, but in the night she drove a tent peg through his head.

Far away in Sisera's palace his mother anxiously watched through her latticed window for her son's return.

> Why is his chariot so long in coming?
> Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?
>
> JUDGES 5. 28

Her ladies replied that Sisera delayed in order to divide the spoils of war. The booty would include rich garments, and the ladies took pleasure in imagining the bright dyes and rich embroideries. But Sisera's chariot never came, for Sisera lay dead at Jael's feet.

This superb paean of triumph ends on a note of confidence that all Yahweh's enemies will perish like Sisera. The author ascribed his poem to Deborah, one of the leaders in the struggle, but we believe it to be the work of some great but unknown poet, who, with consummate literary skill, portrayed the life, the battles, and the warlike faith of those far-off days.

A century or so later Saul, Israel's first king, was defeated in battle. The battlefield was at Mount Gilboa and the enemy was the Philistines, those inhabitants of the sea-coast who bequeathed their name to Palestine. When Saul learned that his son Jonathan was dead and that the battle had gone against him, he died, like Roland of a later day, by falling on his own sword. News of the calamity reached David and he poured out his grief in a noble lament.

> The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places:
> How are the mighty fallen! . . .
> Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
> And in their death they were not divided:
> They were swifter than eagles,
> They were stronger than lions.
> Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul . . .
> How are the mighty fallen,
> And the weapons of war perished!
>
> I SAMUEL I. 19–27

If this is a genuine poem by David it is one of the few ancient Hebrew writings to which we can attach a definite name and date. Saul died in 1013 B.C. and the elegy must have been composed under the shadow of that shocking disaster.

Other ancient fragments scattered through the Old Testament books are: the Blessing of Noah, the Song of the Well, Joshua's Command to the Sun and Moon, some of the ancient laws, and a number of old riddles. All these fragments must have circulated orally for many years and have been recited around camp fires and at city gates until their form was polished and their rhythm became perfect.

The next step in their preservation was taken when someone collected these popular songs and sayings and wrote them in a book. This is not merely a theory, for there is definite evidence in the Bible that the Hebrews had at least two old anthologies of poetry and song. One was entitled the Book of Jasher. We are fairly certain that it contained David's elegy, for the title of the book is mentioned just before the opening line of the elegy. Joshua's command to the sun and moon to stand still also came from this anthology as we learn from the question:

> Is not this written in the book of Jasher?
>
> JOSHUA 10. 13

The second anthology, called the Book of the Wars of the Lord, doubtless contained Miriam's Song and the Ode of Deborah. Thanks to these two anthologies, we now possess examples of the beginnings of a great national literature. What became of the two books we do not know. Long ago all copies of them must have perished, perhaps in the burning of some ancient city. But before these two collections disappeared Miriam's Song, Deborah's superb Ode, David's moving Lament, the Incantations to the Ark, and similar ancient verses had been copied in new volumes and thus saved from the oblivion that swept away all other pieces of early Hebrew literature. In these fossil remains we see the Hebrews learning to express their deepest feelings. In these songs we hear, as it were, the orchestra tuning up for the symphony which is to follow.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FATHER OF HISTORY

The Founding of the Kingdom

The Greek historian Herodotus who lived about 500 B.C. is usually called the Father of History, for the writing of history is thought to have begun with him. The title, however, rightly belongs to another man. He lived in Jerusalem during the reigns of David and Solomon, about 1000 B.C., five hundred years before Herodotus. It was only recently that scholars discovered the true father of history, because the book he wrote suffered a strange fate. It remained in plain sight throughout the centuries, but people who read it did not realise what they were reading. Many of us have read I and II Samuel without knowing that some of its chapters are from the oldest history book in the world.

In studying I and II Samuel scholars noticed a curious thing: They found two accounts of Saul being made king.[1] They saw that David was twice introduced to Saul.[2] They read two similar stories of how David spared Saul's life.[3] To their amazement they read in one chapter how David killed Goliath and in another chapter how Elhanan killed him also.[4] Now Goliath was certainly not killed twice!

"Surely," they said, "these must be clues showing that the Books of Samuel are made up of two separate narratives written by two different authors." Thereupon the scholars became detectives and searched in the text of Samuel for further evidence of two authors. They found two widely different styles and vocabularies and points of view, and it was not long before they disentangled the two or more strands woven together to form the Books of Samuel. The oldest of the strands they found to be an ancient narrative telling the story of the founding of the Hebrew kingdom. It began with the Philistine war which threatened Israel's existence. In the midst of this danger Saul became king and succeeded in uniting the tribes of Israel against the Philistines. Though he was defeated at Mount Gilboa and died there, David succeeded him as king, freeing Israel from Philistine domination and establishing his capital at the mountain fortress of Jerusalem. The central part

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[1] I Samuel 10. 17–24; 11. 15.

[2] I Samuel 16. 14–23; 17. 55–58.

[3] I Samuel 24. 3–7; 26. 5–12.

[4] I Samuel 17. II Samuel 21. 19.

of the narrative[1] tells of the chief events of David's reign and by itself forms a biography of Israel's most popular king.

Once the old narrative embedded in the Books of Samuel had been discovered, the search for its author began. Scholars were convinced that only an eyewitness could have written many of the stories which take us into the royal court itself and into David's presence. The question of authorship narrowed down to this: who in David's court could have written this book? In those days few but priests were able to write. The two priests who were most often with David were Abiathar and Ahimaaz, and either may have been the author. To-day the majority of scholars favour the theory that Abiathar was the author.

Abiathar's biography of the king is a portrait drawn from life. This is not a picture of an ideal king and a picturesque court, but an honest, objective record of David's reign. Abiathar shows us that David was often generous and chivalrous, but he also shows us that David was an Oriental monarch in a cruel age. The stories are not always pleasant to read, for they contain fratricide, adultery, murder, and treason. Abiathar gives us the harsh facts as he saw them, neither praising nor blaming the royal family.

From every point of view the old narrative in the Books of Samuel is a remarkable achievement. Long before it was written the Egyptians had inscribed accounts of their conquests on monuments, and the Hittites had kept annals of their empire, but all of these are little more than lists of events and in no sense history books to compare with The Founding of the Kingdom. As far as we know, this volume, written by a Hebrew priest around 1000 B.C., is the oldest book of history in the world. With no models to follow Abiathar, or whoever the author was, created the art of history writing.

Moreover, his book marks the emergence of Hebrew prose writing. So far, the oldest things we have found in the Bible have been poetry. The Founding of the Kingdom is our earliest example of the extensive use of Hebrew prose. We should expect its style to be crude, undeveloped, and poor in quality. This, however, is not the case. Abiathar was a gifted writer. His descriptions are sharp and clear, his characters move before our eyes and speak in lifelike words, his stories are dramatic. In Hebrew literature there is no finer style than his, and one must search long through the literature of mankind before finding anything to equal the vigour and simplicity of The Founding of the Kingdom. The oldest surviving example of Hebrew prose is also one of its best.

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[1] II Samuel 9–20.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EPIC OF ISRAEL

THE J NARRATIVE

SOMETIME between the years 950 and 850 B.C., a man sat in a quiet room in Jerusalem writing upon a roll of papyrus. He was forging the scattered stories, the legends, and the memories of his race into an enduring record. How enduring that record was to prove would have astonished him. After nearly three thousand years we read his book to-day and find many of its stories as fresh and alive as though they had been written yesterday.

We do not know who the writer was, but from hints in his book we can piece together a number of facts about him. He was a man of Judah, living, no doubt, in Jerusalem. As his name for God was Jahveh (Yahweh), we call this writer the Jahvist or simply J. The book he wrote is known as the J Document, a title that fails to indicate the vividness and the drama of his superb Epic of Israel.

Though J's book no longer exists as a separate volume, it still survives and can be found and read in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It runs throughout the entire Pentateuch and probably continues on into Joshua and Judges, forming the oldest stratum of continuous writing in the opening books of the Bible. Only the ancient fragments are older, and though The Founding of the Kingdom is a hundred or more years older, it is not in the Pentateuch. A table of contents was an unknown convenience in J's day, but we can make one for his book. Though we are uncertain about the extent of the J epic it probably contained these stories:

The Creation of Man
The Garden of Eden
Cain and Abel
Noah and His Ark
Abraham and the Promise
Isaac and Jacob
Joseph's Adventures
Moses and the Exodus
The Invasion of Canaan
Stories of the Judges

The table of contents shows at a glance the scope of the epic. Beginning with the creation of the earth J unfolded, against the vast panorama of world history, the story of Israel's rise and her triumph under Yahweh. Nothing like this had ever been done before.

J did not invent the stories that served to carry his long history forward. The plan is his and the masterful telling of the stories, the grace and charm of the narrative are due to his literary genius, but the stories themselves he borrowed. They were already centuries old when he began to write. Like Shakespeare who, it is said, did not invent his plots but took them from old chronicles and early plays, so J took the materials for his history from the songs and legends of his people. Some, no doubt, came from written documents like the Book of Jasher or the Book of the Wars of the Lord, others were legends his grandfather had told him, still others he had heard as a boy standing motionless and wide-eyed in the crowd gathered at the city gate to listen to a storyteller. Not a few were stories taken from Israel's Babylonian and Egyptian heritage. Through the years J collected his material which, like a heap of coloured beads, remained separate and miscellaneous until J found the thread upon which to string each one carefully and in order.

The thread was his idea, or perhaps we would call it his faith. He saw Yahweh's hand at work in the affairs of men shaping them according to a divine plan. History was to him the working out of Yahweh's will for Israel. In all that happened, in Abraham's migrations, in Joseph's sojourn in Egypt, in the rescue of the infant Moses from death, J saw Yahweh behind the events, guiding them according to His purposes. It was this magnificent conception which gave form and unity to the Epic of Israel. It accomplished the author's purpose of teaching men that Yahweh was the God of Israel. The first readers of the epic surely caught J's vision of Israel marching forward through the centuries toward a glorious destiny under the banner of God.

The unknown author wrote with consummate skill and he must be classed with Abiathar as a master of Hebrew prose. Who can forget the characters he drew? There was dignified Abraham, ambitious Jacob, cunning Esau, brilliant Joseph, inspired Moses. After reading about these people they become as real to us as people we actually know. If we give J our whole attention and imagination he can paint for us scenes, like those of women drawing water at the well, which are as vivid as a motion picture. He was a prince among story tellers. His plots move swiftly, the details are concrete, and the dialogue is pointed and dramatic. Even in translation J's style is both noble and simple, majestic and yet direct. It is no wonder that stories from the Epic of Israel have captivated people for nearly three thousand years.

CHAPTER SIX

A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ISRAEL

THE E NARRATIVE

Two hundred years after the father of history wrote The Founding of the Kingdom and a hundred years or more after J completed his Epic of Israel, another literary genius appeared. He lived about 750 B.C. after the United Kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon had been split into North and South. J belonged to the tribe of Judah which became part of the Southern Kingdom, but the new writer lived in the Northern Kingdom and belonged to the tribe of Ephraim. Bethel instead of Jerusalem was his city, and there is every reason to believe that he was one of the priests who officiated in Bethel's Temple.

He wanted others to see in history the evidence of God's dealings with His People. Accordingly, he set out to write a Religious History of Israel.

As we do not know this priest's name, we take the initial letter of his word for God, Elohim, and of his tribe, Ephraim, and call this writer E and his Religious History of Israel the E Document.

E's history is really a serial story in many parts, beginning with the Abraham legends and probably ending with the history of King Saul. In his long story, as in the Epic of Israel, the centuries come and go, and with them the patriarchs, Moses, the Judges, and Saul, but Elohim or Yahweh remains the central figure, dominating the history of Israel and giving it meaning.

There are two masterpieces in E's history. One is the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, where the author makes us see the little boy, the bundle of wood, the knife, and the ram caught in the thicket, and makes us feel sympathy for Abraham, the broken-hearted father. The second masterpiece is the Joseph story. This reaches its climax when Joseph, then the most powerful official in Egypt, tells the brothers who had once sold him into slavery who he really is. It is a tense moment. The brothers, remembering their treatment of Joseph years before, are terrified, for now Joseph has them completely in his power. Here are the words E puts in Joseph's mouth:

> Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. . . . So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God . . . . God hath made me lord of all Egypt. GENESIS 45. 5, 8, 9

There speaks the priest of Bethel who saw in everything that happened to the people of Israel the guiding hand of God.

The E Document must have been eagerly read by the priests of Judah who found many of its stories of the patriarchs, Moses, and the Judges similar to the stories in their own Epic of Israel. But the priests noticed that some of the stories were slightly different from their versions. The style and point of view of the two histories were different, as was perhaps only to be expected in works written a hundred or more years apart. In spite of all their differences, it was plain that both J and E worshipped the same God and saw His hand guiding Israel. The priests in Jerusalem treasured the old E roll and made copies of it. Perhaps they required all candidates for the priesthood to study it and, no doubt, professors lectured on the two histories, noting such differences as these:

J THE EPIC OF ISRAEL	E THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ISRAEL
Yahweh (Jahveh)	Elohim
Judean traditions	Ephraim (northern) traditions
Patriotic and national	Priestly point of view
Dramatic	Logical and systematic
Crude stories	More polished and refined stories
Yahweh appears in person	Elohim reveals himself through dreams and angels
Grandeur of style	Elaborate style
Simple	Detailed
Example of J:	The way E writes of the same incident:
And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. GENESIS 31. 3	And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: and I said, Here am I. And he said . . . I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred. GENESIS 31. 11–13

For many years the priests struggled with the difficulty of having two histories of Israel, until someone suggested that it would be more convenient to have the J Document and the E Document combined in a single roll. The man who prepared the new edition in which J and E were joined did a skilful piece of work. Sometimes he chose a story from one document, probably discarding a parallel one from the other. Again he gave the same story from both J and E side by side. He even wove together a story from J and the same one from E in such a way that they formed a single narrative.

Here is an example of how the editor dovetailed two slightly different stories of the same event. Many people read this story without noticing the conflicting details. The portions in roman letters are J's story and, when read by themselves, form a complete account of how Joseph was sold by his brothers to Ishmaelites travelling to Egypt. E's narrative is based on different traditions in which Reuben protects Joseph and Midianites steal him from a pit. It is here printed in italics.

> And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. *And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.* And Reuben[1] heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him. *And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.*
>
> And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; *and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread:* and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. *Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit,* and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.
>
> *And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not and I, whither shall I go?* And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This we have found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or not. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without

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[1] This should probably be Judah. In dovetailing the two accounts the word Judah, which originally stood here, was changed to the Reuben of our present versions.

doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. . . . Thus his father wept for him. *And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and captain of the guard.*

GENESIS 37. 17–36

By 650 B.C. there was a new history of Israel built with bricks from the J Document, written sometime between 950 and 850 B.C., and from the E Document of about 750 B.C. How we wish we now had the two original rolls so that we might prove our theories! The J E edition of Israel's history long remained popular, so popular, indeed, that priests and writers continued to copy and revise it, adding new chapters whenever they saw fit. In spite of countless editors and copyists whose work obscured the old outlines, we believe that to-day we can trace the oldest stratum of continuous writing in the books from Genesis to Samuel and that this is the J E history of Israel. Of the other adventures that befell this history we shall speak in a later chapter. But now we shall turn from the writing of history to the writing of prophecy.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FIRST BOOK OF PROPHECY

AMOS

IT was a feast day in Bethel and the city streets were filled with people on their way to the Temple to offer sacrifices. The King of Israel, Jeroboam II, was expected to be present, and Amaziah, the high priest, would officiate. Perhaps the historian whom we call E rolled up his writing on that day to take his place with the other priests in the elaborate ritual accompanying the feasts and burnt offerings. The time, as nearly as we can determine it, was the year 760 B.C.

On almost every face in the crowd there was a smile of satisfaction. Never had Israel been so powerful among the nations as she was during these "boom" years. Rich men rubbed shoulders with haughty officials. Ladies of fashion who had just risen from their ivory couches paraded down the street in all their silk finery. Sounds of feasting, drinking and merrymaking arose from all sides. Only occasionally was there a pitiful sight to be seen. Here was a man weeping because he must sell his daughter into slavery in order to provide food for his family. There were children whose pale faces showed evidences of hunger and wretchedness. All was not well in Israel. False weights were used in the market place. Injustice presided over the courts of law, and a person in trouble could find no kindness. Serious wrongs existed in Israel and there were dishonesty and cruelty everywhere. But few people on that feast day noticed injustice and wretchedness. They were intent on winning Yahweh's favour, and they believed this could be done by offering Him burnt sacrifices. So far as we know the men and women of Israel were blind to the importance of upright, honest living. No voice had yet proclaimed to them that sacrifices cannot buy Yahweh's favour.

As the prosperous men and women of Bethel swept along the street toward the Temple, they may have noticed a stranger standing on a corner watching them with keen, unsmiling eyes. He was evidently a shepherd lately come to town from the hills of Judah, for he wore a sheepskin garment and in his strong, toil-stained hands he carried a shepherd's staff.

"A country yokel!" sneered one of the passers-by, little knowing that here was a man destined to be remembered for centuries as one of the truly great men, not only of Israel, but of all humanity.

The stranger in Bethel on that feast day in 760 B.C. was Amos. There was a burden on his mind. Yahweh had spoken to him and, true prophet that he was, Amos felt impelled to deliver His message.

He began to speak to a little group of curious people gathered close about him to hear. His first words created a sensation.

> Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof.
>
> AMOS 1. 3

"Good!" shouted the people.

They were delighted to hear that Yahweh was angry with their old enemy Damascus. Few of them noticed the full implication of the prophecy they cheered so heartily. If Yahweh announced that He would punish Damascus, He must be a god whose power extended not only over Israel but over other nations as well. In the excitement of cheering Amos, the crowd did not realise that his words were to cause a revolution in their theology. The old idea of Yahweh as Israel's own, exclusive, national God could no longer survive after Amos began to teach that Yahweh was supreme over all nations.

The crowd pressed closer to listen to the new soothsayer or prophet, for they liked his opening words. Surely he would go on to tell them other things they enjoyed hearing. But Amos was a prophet of quite another sort.

The crowd applauded when Amos declared Yahweh's anger against the children of Ammon for their atrocities. They agreed that Yahweh should be angry against Moab for burning "the bones of the king of Edom into lime". But a roar of protest greeted the climax of Amos' prophecy:

> Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of *Israel*, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof.
>
> AMOS 2. 6

People were aghast. How could Yahweh punish His own people Israel? What had they done to make Him angry? Surely they had not failed to offer sacrifices. There had never been such a vast crowd in Bethel as was here to-day to please Yahweh with offerings. The shouts of disapproval died down as men and women strained to hear why their God was angry with them. In the hush Amos thundered the Lord's denunciation:

> Because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.
>
> AMOS 2. 6

Some of the bystanders merely laughed. It was ridiculous to suppose that Yahweh cared about such trifling matters as foreclosing a mortgage and selling a man into slavery. What if this involved a little cheating and a bribe or two to the judge? Everyone did these things. If there was anything wrong in them and Yahweh was angry, surely the Temple sacrifices would placate Him.

The crowd shifted away from the prophet who said such uncomfortable things, but Amos continued to preach wherever men would listen to him. He tried to make them understand that Yahweh could not be bribed with any offering, for He was a righteous God. This idea, which is a commonplace to-day, was a strange, new doctrine then and men could not understand it. "Hear what the Lord says," pleaded Amos:

> I hate, I despise your feast days . . . Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
>
> AMOS 5. 21–3

Who ever heard of God not being pleased with all the elaborate ritual of their religion? The very idea was preposterous. From the crowd someone shouted: "Well, what does Yahweh want, then?" Amos answered in words Yahweh had given him:

> Let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.
>
> AMOS 5. 24

Amos left no doubt in any mind that it was righteousness, not ritual, which the Lord wanted.

> Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate.
>
> AMOS 5. 14, 15

Amos also made it perfectly clear that Yahweh was Lord of all nations:

> Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord.
>
> AMOS 9. 7

The city of Bethel was now in a turmoil. Men argued shrilly about Amos in the market place, and on every hand his revolutionary phrases were repeated. Amaziah, the high priest, was troubled when he saw that attendance at the sacrifices was falling off. It began to look as though men were taking the new teaching seriously. To Amaziah, Amos' ideas were theologically unsound and his preaching a sacrilege. The situation was getting out of hand. With his own ears Amaziah heard Amos say:

> The sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.
>
> AMOS 7. 9

The high priest knew that the moment had come to act. This was even worse than sacrilege, it was sedition and the King must stop it. There was no telling what would happen if Amos convinced people that Yahweh had deserted Israel's king.

After sending an urgent warning to King Jeroboam, Amaziah took matters into his own hands. The priest confronted the prophet. He forbade Amos to prophesy in Bethel and rudely ordered him to go home to Judah. Amos calmly defended himself declaring that his authority to prophesy came from the Lord Himself.

> And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord.
>
> AMOS 7. 15, 16

When he had delivered the Lord's messages in Bethel, Amos set out for his home in Tekoa, a mountaintop village lying a day's journey to the south. There he dictated to one of his followers the prophecies he had spoken in Israel. On all sides the barren Judean hills stretched toward the horizon and only the bleating of sheep broke the silence. In a rude mud hut the scribe bent over his scroll and wrote swiftly to keep up with the pace of Amos' dictation. There was rhythm and form and tremendous power in the prophecies. They abounded in judgments on national and international affairs and they were alive with comments on city life and country ways. The scribe knew that Amos was one of the great men of the time, but he probably never fully realised that his roll of prophecy would create a new epoch in history and literature and religion.

The Book of Amos was the first Old Testament book to be completed. Abiathar's history and the J Document are older, but in our Bible these are no longer separate books. Amos was the first book of prophecy and it ushered in the prophetic movement of the eighth century B.C. which established a high-water mark in spiritual history. Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah were to follow Amos in teaching that God is righteous and that He demands righteousness of men.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROPHECY

HOSEA, ISAIAH, MICAH

AMOS did not stand alone. With him there dawned in Israel an age of prophecy made glorious by Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. To these four spokesmen of the Lord the eighth century was far from being a golden age. The minds of the prophets were attuned to the holiness and righteousness and love of God; no wonder that they saw the evils of their day as a dark stain against that holiness. Their century was sick and they knew of no remedy effective enough to cure it but upright living and true worship. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah had by their sins offended the righteousness of Yahweh, and destruction surely awaited them unless the prophets could open men's eyes and make them see their danger and act. The prophets threw themselves into their unpopular task of reproof and warning. Prophecy is not "history written beforehand" and the prophets were not cheap soothsayers and fortunetellers. Nor were they dreamy mystics enjoying a beautiful vision. Rather, they were practical men fired with a vision of God's reality and righteousness and inspired to put that vision into words.

Their mission was heartbreakingly difficult. "Thus saith the Lord" they declared to the deaf and unheeding ears of Israel. Israel had her eye upon the grim reality of tribute money, foreign envoys, Egyptian chariots, and Assyrian armies. She hardly listened when Isaiah said:

> Now the Egyptians are men, and not God;
> And their horses flesh, and not spirit.
>
> ISAIAH 31. 3

Would Israel never see that the mightiest reality in the world is God and that men and nations only break themselves when they oppose God's will?

As the great eighth-century prophets utter "Woe" and "Hear ye" we seem to be listening to the thunder of approaching doom. In our day the social injustices and the political and international catastrophes of their century have faded into history so that we often fail to understand exactly what they mean by their references to obscure issues. But the main points of their message remain clear and valid to-day, long after doom overtook both the Northern and the Southern kingdoms. The centuries have tested the quality of the prophets' inspiration and accorded to these four men, and to the prophets who followed them, a supreme place in human history. With them there began to shine upon Israel a glory and a splendour that raised her life above that of her ancient neighbours and endowed her literature and her religion with deathless values.

Among the crowd in the streets of Bethel where Amos first spoke his prophecies there may have been one young man who was profoundly moved by what he heard. As he listened he forgot the jeers of the crowd and the uncouth appearance of the prophet, for the words of Amos stirred his mind and heart and kindled a strange new spirit within him. When the voice of Amos ceased, the succession of the prophets passed to the young man who had perhaps listened to him in the crowd. The young man was Hosea, son of Beeri. Hosea might well have become merely a follower of Amos, content to repeat the prophet's teaching about the justice of God and to work for the social reforms this teaching demanded. But an even greater destiny than this awaited Hosea. Beside the idea of the justice of God, Israel's religion needed a second pillar to support it. God was austere and terrible, if men knew only His justice. No one had yet seen deeply enough into God's nature to perceive His love. To Hosea it was granted to discover this profound truth.

Concerning the events of his outward life his book contains only one story, that of his marriage to Gomer, narrated in the first and third chapters. Gomer is described as an immoral woman, and we read that after she had left his home and taken other lovers Hosea bought her back for the price of a common slave. As many factors of this story are puzzling, some people think it may not be the actual history of the prophet's tragic marriage, but a story Hosea told as a parable to illustrate the heart of his message. We shall, perhaps, never know whether or not Hosea's great prophetic teaching rose out of some bitter tragedy such as Gomer's unfaithfulness to him; but many scholars believe that personal suffering was the cost of Hosea's tremendous message.

Hosea took the idea of the marriage relationship to describe the relationship of Yahweh to His People Israel. Hosea said that God was like a loving husband and Israel was His wife. In an age when men cringed before Yahweh and feared His anger, this was a new and startling teaching. People believed their relation to God was little better than that of a slave bowing and trembling before a powerful, Oriental despot.

This new teaching that they, as members of Israel, were loved by God as a wife is loved by her husband was a strange new doctrine. But what of Israel, the wife? Like Gomer, Israel had been unfaithful, for she had adopted the religious practices of other nations and worshipped strange gods. The state of Israel's political disorders and her dangerous international situation were all, Hosea said, evidences of her unfaithfulness to the God who loved her.

Most of Hosea's utterances are concerned with Israel's unfaithfulness, which lies like a dark shadow on every page of this book. But the very darkness of the shadow implies an intense brightness on the other side. There would have been no shadow at all if Hosea had not seen on the other side of Israel's faithlessness the radiance of the love of God.

At times the radiance breaks through, as in these words of tenderness in which Hosea pictured God as the Father of Ephraim or Israel:

> When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt . . . I taught Ephraim also to go [walk], taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them . . . with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them . . . How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee.
>
> HOSEA 11. 1, 3, 4, 8, 9

Hosea's influence on the prophets who followed him was immense. We can trace his ideas in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Centuries later Hosea's teachings were so well known that Jesus chided[1] the Pharisees for not understanding the meaning of Hosea's great sentence:

> For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
>
> HOSEA 6. 6

"Mercy" here includes the ideas of goodness, kindness, and love. By "the knowledge of God" Hosea meant understanding of God's love and a loving relationship to Him. Here, then, in this eighth-century prophet we see the beginning of that idea of God's love and fatherly care which, though strange and new to the ancient Israelites, has now become a cornerstone of faith to Christians who pray, "Our Father Who art in heaven."

The third great prophet of the eighth century was Isaiah, who was born about 760 B.C. while the streets of Bethel still echoed with the prophecies of his fellow countryman Amos. Both prophets were men of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but they belonged to different social groups. Amos was a shepherd of Tekoa, while Isaiah was an influential statesman of Jerusalem. Isaiah may even have been a member of the royal family, entitled by birth to the high position of royal counsellor he held during the reigns of four kings. It was a period of international turmoil in which the little Kingdom of Judah stood in danger. Through all those dark years when kings grew fainthearted and officials plotted intrigue, Isaiah never deviated from his prophetic mission. He continued to preach the message God had given him, reminding men that their truest safety lay in establishing a right relationship with God.

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[1] See Matt. 9. 13; 12. 7.

"In the year king Uzziah died", which would have been about 740 B.C., Isaiah tells us that he received his call to be a prophet. The story in which he records this intense spiritual experience is an Old Testament classic. One day as he was worshipping in the Temple at Jerusalem, a vision of God enthroned in holiness and glory came to him and he cried out in terror that he, a sinful man, should thus behold his Lord.

> Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.
>
> ISAIAH 6. 5

He saw flying toward him a seraph bearing a live coal from the altar. With this the heavenly being touched Isaiah's lips as a sign of forgiveness. Then the voice of the Lord came to him saying: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?"

Isaiah replied: "Here am I; send me." And the Lord said: "Go, and tell this people."

For about forty years Isaiah was the Lord's voice in Jerusalem, performing his task with shining eloquence and high courage. Through all his prophecies echoes the song he heard the seraphim sing:

> Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts:
> The whole earth is full of his glory.
>
> ISAIAH 6. 3

God is holy, Isaiah said, and He demands holiness of men. Like his predecessors Amos and Hosea, Isaiah preached about right living, which for him was part of the true worship of God. He drew up an indictment against Israel for her sins, charging her with cruel injustice, callous enjoyment of wealth, and rampant idol worship. With many a telling phrase he makes us see what life was like in those remote days. He felt that he was speaking for God when he said:

> Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.
>
> ISAIAH I. 16, 17

Whether or not Isaiah ever met his humble fellow countryman, Micah, we do not know. Both preached in Judah during the same period, but, while Isaiah was an aristocrat, Micah was a peasant who distrusted the ways of city men. Micah may have visited Jerusalem, only about twenty miles distant from his native village of Moresheth, but his sympathies were with those who lived in the country. All about him he saw misery and the pinched faces of hungry children. This was not due to poor crops, for Moresheth stands in the midst of rich farm lands. The sufferings Micah saw were caused by wealthy landowners who robbed the farmers of their fields and forced them to work for starvation wages. Often these landowners lived in Jerusalem where they spent their ill-gotten wealth on luxuries. No wonder Micah denounced Jerusalem and warned of its approaching destruction. Like all the prophets he demanded justice. He poured out his indignation upon the greed of the rich, the rulers, the judges, and the priests.

Micah's prophecies were collected in the first three chapters of the book bearing his name. Though the remaining four chapters are probably the work of an unknown prophet, they contain several famous passages, chief among which is the challenging question and answer:

> What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?
>
> MICAH 6. 8

As time went by, men's consciences were stirred by this question. Though the prophets themselves often preached to deaf ears, and banishment and martyrdom fell to their lot, a change was on the way. Jeremiah reports that Micah's denunciations moved King Hezekiah to repent. Israel stood in need of reform. This was not long delayed, for in the seventh century a book was to appear which ushered in a religious and moral reformation. Though it was not a book of prophecy, we can see in it the influence of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah. Their words at length bore fruit. The spirit of the prophets triumphed.

CHAPTER NINE

THE BOOK FOUND IN THE TEMPLE

Deuteronomy

It was payday for the carpenters, builders, and masons at work on the repairs of Jerusalem's Temple. The year was 621 B.C., the eighteenth year of the reign of King Josiah. Shaphan, the king's scribe or secretary of state, was on his way from the royal palace to the Temple. It was his duty to be present when the high priest Hilkiah opened the collection box of the Temple and distributed the money it contained to the workmen for their wages.

As Shaphan hurried along the streets of the city he saw many signs of the heathen worship of his day. There were altars to Assyrian gods in the very Temple itself. Everywhere people practised idolatry. Superstition and witchcraft flourished. From the shrine of Tophet, in the valley of Hinnom just outside the walls of Jerusalem, Shaphan saw smoke rising and he shuddered. Here was the altar where men offered their first-born as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of Molech. To this barbaric level had Israel fallen in that evil and desperate day. It seemed as though the lofty moral and spiritual teachings of the prophets had been completely forgotten and that Israel was doomed to occupy a place of dishonour among the peoples of antiquity. Manasseh and Amon, who had reigned from 693 to 638 B.C., were half-heathen kings and it was their foreign policy to flatter their Assyrian overlords by adopting Assyrian cults and religious practices. When Amon was murdered his eight-year-old son Josiah ascended the throne of Judah. Now, at the age of twenty-six, Josiah decided to stamp out the evils of his father's and his grandfather's reigns. It was for this reason that in the year 621 B.C., the Temple was being repaired and put in order for the worship of Yahweh.

When Shaphan reached the Temple he found everyone highly excited.

"See," exclaimed Hilkiah, forgetting his high-priestly dignity and rushing toward the scribe, "I have found the book of law in the house of the Lord!"

He thrust a dust-covered scroll into Shaphan's hands. Workmen had just found it behind a loose stone in a recess of the building. Why had it been put there instead of in the Temple library? What did the book contain and why were the priests

so excited about it? There was something strange about the whole affair, and Shaphan decided to take the scroll to the King at once.

He paid the workmen their wages and hurried back to the palace with the roll under his arm. The King was curious about the dusty book and ordered his scribe to read it to him. Shaphan read to the end, rolled up the scroll, and waited breathlessly for the King to issue his royal command concerning the extraordinary book. Shapan looked up and to his amazement saw King Josiah rise slowly and deliberately from his throne and, in the ancient gesture of sorrow and remorse, rend his clothes.

What sort of book was it to cause such excitement at the Temple and such an act of repentance by a king? The scroll was none other than the first edition of our Book of Deuteronomy, probably the most significant book ever written by a Hebrew. In majestic and sonorous language it laid down Israel's religious and moral laws. Comparing the lofty demands of these laws with the low moral and spiritual level to which Israel had fallen, we can understand why the young King, his high priest, and his secretary of state were dismayed and shocked and why the King's first response was a gesture of repentance.

Josiah did far more than rend his garments. He immediately called a public assembly of officials, priests, prophets, and common people. The roll was read and in the hush that followed the King rose and solemnly promised to keep the Lord's commandments and to obey all His laws as written in the book. For their part, the people "stood to the covenant", ratifying the King's vow. Thereupon a wave of reform swept through the land. The nation desired to become "a holy people unto the Lord". Altars to heathen gods were torn down. Idols were smashed. All objects connected with pagan cults were thrown into bonfires. The shrine in Hinnom was destroyed. At Jerusalem the Temple, now rebuilt and cleansed of impurity, became fit for the dwelling place of God and the one centre for His true worship. Men taught their children the watchword of the whole reform:

> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Deuteronomy 6. 4, 5

The scroll found in the Temple touched off not only religious reforms but social ones as well. It contained a primitive bill of rights. Under the new laws of Deuteronomy there was more justice for everyone. Women, foreigners, and the poor were protected and the rights of slaves and employees were recognised. It was a triumph for the message of the prophets.

CHAPTER TEN

EDITING ISRAEL'S HISTORY

Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings

Inspired by Deuteronomy, Josiah's reforms of 621 B.C. made Jerusalem the religious capital of the kingdom, the holy city of Israel. Shrines and altars throughout the country were torn down in order to stamp out heathen cults with their evil practices. Only at the altar in Jerusalem's Temple might people offer sacrifices to Yahweh. Here people from the villages and towns of Judah came every spring to celebrate the Passover. Often they must have brought with them documents and books of many kinds, for they knew the priests at the Temple were collecting a library of Hebrew literature and would be glad to purchase volumes they did not already have. The shelves of the Temple library must have held many torn and ancient rolls, as well as new volumes in which the ink was hardly dry. What would we not give to be able to browse in that library to-day! We would handle reverently the book that caused a reformation: the first edition of Deuteronomy. We would gaze at the prophecies of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, all written in the handwriting of their disciples. The most venerable rolls in the collection would be the Book of Jasher and the Book of the Wars of the Lord. If the priests had been able to save the original manuscript of Abiathar's Founding of the Kingdom with its eyewitness account of David's reign, we would find ourselves looking at a roll then almost four hundred years old! The two splendid old epics of Israel by J and E were nearly as old, though their combined version had been completed only recently.

At the time of which we write, about 600 B.C., we might have found certain shelves in the library empty. These were the shelves where the historical records of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were usually kept. They were in constant use at that time. In another room of the Temple a group of priests had spread these rolls of history upon their desks and they were bending over them patiently deciphering the writing of long dead royal scribes and historians, and forgotten Temple recorders. The priests read with their pens poised and fresh rolls on the desks beside them. They belonged to a guild of writers who were engaged in bringing out a new edition of Israel's history

based on the old records. Now and again one of them would pause in his reading to copy out a passage he wanted to include in the new history.

These priestly writers had excellent sources to work with. They doubtless had a complete set of the Chronicles of the Temple going back to the date of its foundation. The Record of Solomon's Reign (I Kings 11. 41) was filled with a wealth of detail. The History of the Kings of Israel and its companion volume, the History of the Kings of Judah (II Kings 13. 12, 21. 25) contained official reports of the reigns of all the kings. Probably biographies of Elijah and Elisha completed the list of documents. From these ample sources of Hebrew history the priestly historians were gathering material for their new book.

They were inspired by the teachings of Deuteronomy and hence they are often pompously named Deuteronomic historians. It is hardly fair, however, to call them historians, for they were not attempting to make an objective record of past events. If their book is judged by historical standards it falls short. Actually these men were religious teachers. They tried to use the facts of history to prove that the ideals of Deuteronomy were true. They believed that if the king and the nation walked in the ways of Yahweh and kept His statutes and commandments they would prosper. History proved this to them. Accordingly, they set out to tell the story of the nation, from the accession of Solomon to the reign of Josiah, from the point of view of Deuteronomy. They marshalled the kings of four centuries, thirty-eight royal personages in all, and caused them to pass in review before the reader. Of each ruler they asked: was he loyal to Yahweh and did he worship exclusively in Jerusalem? These were definite teachings of Deuteronomy and each king was tested by them. If his record gave a "yes" to the questions, the king was judged "right in the eyes of the Lord". If the king worshipped Baal and offered sacrifices to idols he was said to have "done evil in the sight of the Lord".

The priestly historians warn their readers that they are not giving the full picture of any king. Over and over again they insert sentences like this:

> The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?
>
> I Kings 15. 23

When the priests finished their book it formed a companion volume to Deuteronomy. Originally one book, it was later divided into two parts and called I and II Kings. On its pages the history of four hundred years teaches the ideals of Deuteronomy. But the Books of Kings are not in themselves true history. The day came, however, when the old chronicles and histories of Israel and Judah perished, doubtless in the flames that destroyed the Temple when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In some way I and II Kings was fortunately saved. But for this book of religious instructions we should know little of the royal personages of Judah: Solomon the magnificent, who built the Temple; Rehoboam the unwise, who lost half a kingdom; Asa, who deposed his mother because she worshipped idols; Jehoshaphat; Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and the infamous Jezebel; Amaziah; Jotham; Hezekiah, the good king who listened to Isaiah; Manasseh, the evil king who worshipped Assyrian gods; and Josiah the reformer. In our sample roll call we must mention among Israel's kings: Jeroboam the revolutionist; Omri the great and Ahab his son; Jehu, who drove furiously; Jeroboam II, in whose reign Amos preached; and Hoshea, who saw Israel destroyed.

So successful were the Books of Kings that other priestly historians with the teachings of Deuteronomy in their hearts decided to issue new volumes of history. The destruction of the Temple and captivity in Babylonia did not quench their enthusiasm to record the history of Israel's early period from the conquest of Canaan to the accession of Solomon. Somehow they managed to save the old scrolls they needed: the J and E epics, the hero tales, an account of Samuel, and Abiathar's Founding of the Kingdom. All these they may have transported across the weary miles of the old caravan route to Babylon, for it was probably there that the Deuteronomic editions of Joshua, Judges, and I and II Samuel were first issued about 550 B.C.

Following the pattern established by the authors of Kings, all these books contained much old material from the ancient scrolls, reworked and edited from the new point of view. Joshua contained the old J E stories of the conquest of Canaan rewritten in the style of Deuteronomy. The hero Joshua became the mouthpiece of the priestly historians and they caused him to exhort men to:

> Love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.
>
> JOSHUA 22. 5

For the Book of Judges the priests did little rewriting. The ancient stories of tribal leaders and judges were of exceptional literary brilliance. These tales the priests reset, like old family jewels, in new settings. The new settings consist of introductions and conclusions pointing out the religious meaning of the stories. The priests saw an ebb and flow in the history of this period which they believed was due to the nation's sins. When the Israelites disobeyed the Lord, He punished them by allowing their enemies to overwhelm them. Then they cried out in distress and the Lord sent them a deliverer. At the death of the deliverer or "judge" the cycle of irreligion, disaster, repentance, and restoration began again. In the hands of sixth-century writers the superb old stories of Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson became the means of teaching that God's hand is at work in history.

Following Judges came I and II Samuel. It covered the period dominated by Samuel the kingmaker, Saul, Israel's first king, and David the conqueror of Jerusalem. The priestly historians had plenty of source material for these rulers, and we are greatly indebted to them for copying word by word into their book, Abiathar's Founding of the Kingdom. But for them we might have lost the first history book in the world.

When I and II Samuel was finished, about 550 B.C., it closed the gap between Joshua and Judges on one side and I and II Kings on the other. It fitted into place like a keystone in the arch of Israel's history. These Deuteronomic editions now spanned six centuries of history and added their evidence to the teachings of Deuteronomy itself. This series of books of religious instruction based on history passed through many editions. For three hundred years the series was often revised and enlarged. About 200 B.C. the books were canonised, or declared to be sacred writings, and thereafter no significant changes were made in their text. This series preserved a great deal of early Hebrew literature and history. It also profoundly affected Jewish religion. It has been said that history was a kind of sacrament to Israel. In the "outward and visible" facts of history Israel saw the face of her God. No wonder, then, that this historical series was not classified as history but was named the Former Prophets. Christianity rang with echoes from the pages of these books, and their stories and ideas became one note in the theme song of our religion and our civilisation.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PROPHET TO A DOOMED NATION

Jeremiah

It was just eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem which we have mentioned. On a cold December day in 604 B.C., King Jehoiakim sat in his palace in Jerusalem warming himself before the glowing coals of his brazier. A group of government officials entered the royal chamber with news of a strange event. A scribe named Baruch had caused a sensation in the Temple that very day by reading a scroll of prophecy. He had stationed himself in an upper window overlooking the Temple gate and from there he had read in a loud voice to all the people. Next, Baruch had read the book to the officials themselves and when they questioned him closely about it he had declared that the prophecies were dictated by a prophet named Jeremiah.

King Jehoiakim knew the prophet Jeremiah well. "That fellow again!" he must have muttered to himself, "I thought he was under house arrest and forbidden to prophesy."

Seeing the agitation of his ministers, the King ordered the scroll to be brought and read to him. He would deal with the matter once and for all. For more than twenty years Jeremiah had been prophesying, always stirring up the people, criticising the government, and predicting the downfall of the nation. He had even dared criticise King Jehoiakim himself for compelling his subjects to work as slaves on the new palace. All this was poison in the minds of the people. Jehoiakim knew he must act decisively to prevent the dangerous ideas from spreading. He could easily lose his kingdom if men were convinced that Jeremiah's prophecies were really the words of Yahweh.

The roll was brought and its solemn words were read. The King took a penknife and as each column was finished he slashed it from the roll and tossed it on the glowing coals of the brazier. There the papyrus curled, blackened, and was consumed. Three of his counsellors advised the King not to burn the roll. They were more than half-convinced the words were indeed from God. Burning God's word was an act of extreme impiety. But Jehoiakim contemptuously brushed aside their pleas and continued feeding pieces of the roll to the fire. Soon all that remained of it were a few filmy, ghostlike particles floating in the air and a fine dust covering the furniture in the

room. Thus the first edition of the Book of Jeremiah was burned in the palace at Jerusalem.

But though the book was ashes, its author was still alive. For seven years Jeremiah and Baruch remained in hiding, time and again, no doubt, eluding the royal police who searched for them everywhere. There must have been many clever stratagems and hairbreadth escapes, but Jeremiah did far more than outwit the police. He took a fresh roll and, with Baruch acting as his secretary, he dictated a new volume of prophecy. It contained the words burned on the brazier and many more besides. This second roll was more carefully guarded than the first, and it can be read to-day in chapters 1 to 25 of the Book of Jeremiah.

The years in hiding must have been a sore trial to Jeremiah. He had been born in the pleasant country village of Anathoth and he always longed for the sights and sounds of nature. But his call to prophesy: "To root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant," was a call which must be obeyed. Often Jeremiah cursed the fate that doomed him to be always on the unpopular, losing side. He was shy and sensitive by nature. His soul was torn between loyalty to his prophetic call and a keen desire to escape from the dangers and turmoils of his day and lead a quiet country life. The divine message was like a fire burning in his bones and he had to speak out. In the midst of his inner struggles he learned to turn to God and find joy and peace in a sense of nearness to Him. His personal experience of God marks the beginning of a new epoch in religion. Jeremiah has been called the "father of true prayer". He blazed a spiritual trail which became a highway for all the saints.

A day of destruction approached, declared Jeremiah. Assyria had crumbled, but the new empire of Babylonia would soon conquer Judah. Nearly all the political crises of his lifetime are reflected in his prophecies.

Jeremiah faced angry mobs. He was thrown into prison. He spent seven years in hiding. He was flogged. He was put in the stocks. A kindly negro rescued him after he had been lowered into a muddy cistern to die. Jeremiah lived through the horrible days of Jerusalem's siege by the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar. He saw the city fall and its buildings destroyed. He and Baruch were forced to accompany a group of refugees to Egypt, where the story of his heroic life ends.

His influence on religion was undying. It is partly due to him that we take it for granted to-day that God is good. To Jeremiah wisdom, power, and riches were as nothing compared to the supreme joy of knowing God and understanding His loving kindness.

> Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.
>
> JEREMIAH 9. 23, 24

In his own experience he knew a personal relationship with God. This was to be the star shining through chaos and despair when Judah perished as a nation in 586 B.C. Yahweh's people were scattered. Yahweh's dwelling place in Jerusalem no longer stood on Mount Zion. Was Yahweh Himself dead? Jeremiah's experience provided the answer. Every man could know God *in his own heart.* Though the nation and the Temple were lost, Yahweh was still Lord and dwelt in each person's heart. Inspired by this new teaching, the Hebrews triumphantly carried their religion with them, when they went as exiles to Babylon. God's promise through Jeremiah strengthened them:

> I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.
>
> JEREMIAH 31. 33, 34

CHAPTER TWELVE

WRITTEN IN EXILE

EZEKIEL AND THE HOLINESS CODE

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S Chaldean army twice appeared outside the walls of Jerusalem and captured the city on two different occasions. The first time was in 597 B.C. when they plundered the Temple and deported King Jehoiachin and many prominent families. Among the exiles forced to go to Babylonia was a young priest named Ezekiel. The prophet Jeremiah was allowed to remain in Jerusalem where he witnessed the frightful siege of the city eleven years later, in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar again captured the city, following up his victory by burning the Temple, melting down the sacred vessels of brass, silver, and gold, demolishing the city walls, and deporting the people. Again a crowd of displaced persons turned their backs on the smoking ruins of Jerusalem and began their seven-hundred-mile journey along the old trade route to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldean conquerors. Among the exiles were princes of the royal house and

> All the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths.
>
> II KINGS 24. 14

They left behind their holy city, the familiar outlines of the Judean hills, the little country towns, the stony upland pastures, the pleasant fertile valleys, the village wells, and all their accustomed ways of life.

In Babylonia they found a flat, treeless plain with patches of green fields crossed by irrigation ditches. When they reached the Chaldean capital at Babylon they were awestruck by its massive walls and fortifications, its vast temple, and its brilliantly decorated palaces. They saw Babylon's famous Hanging Gardens, which were a series of roof gardens rising tier above tier and crowning the imperial palace with luxuriant trees and flowers. As they stumbled wearily down Nebuchadnezzar's festival avenue they saw the sun shine upon the coloured glazed tiles adorned with animal figures. Here was the most splendid city of the age, built with tribute from many conquered nations and by the labour of many a captive.

The exiles from Judah soon settled down in the new country.

often perhaps among other Hebrews who had arrived in the earlier deportation of 597 B.C. Some of them joined the gangs of builders erecting new palaces for the king; others became diggers of the endless miles of irrigation ditches which brought fertility to Babylonian fields. In an expanding empire there was plenty of work for Hebrew "craftsmen and smiths". The government service offered posts to some of the capable administrators among the exiles. Business and trade flourished under the Chaldeans, and many a Hebrew must have found opportunity for advancement in the banking houses and commercial establishments of the day. Though far from their native land and their beloved Temple, the exiles of the sixth century were in the wealthiest and most active centre of civilisation. Though some of them may have discarded the religion of their fathers and adopted heathen ways, more of them settled down to live in little Hebrew colonies where the customs and beliefs of the homeland were carefully preserved.

While all this was going on and the Hebrews were being absorbed into the Chaldean Empire, Israel as a distinct nation might well have disappeared from history. But this did not happen. The peculiar genius of Israel was her religion. This was a hardy plant of great vitality, which neither died nor withered in the alien air but kept alive the national consciousness of the captives. In exile Israel's religion flourished and put forth some of its sturdiest branches. The old national epics which celebrated Yahweh's care for His people were read and studied. The long-dead prophets continued to teach what God required of men. The ways of life and worship laid down in Deuteronomy were carefully cherished. Men began to understand the truth of Jeremiah's teaching that every heart can be a temple to the Lord. When Israel had no Temple, no sacrifices, and no priesthood, her religious leaders turned to teaching and to editing her literary heritage. As we have seen, some of the historical series from Joshua to the Books of Kings were completed during this period.

There were some among the exiles whose mood was expressed by a later poet:

> By the rivers of Babylon,
> There we sat down, yea, we wept,
> When we remembered Zion.
>
> PSALM 137

In this period, some of the mournful songs of Lamentations were probably written. Their sadness, however, is not characteristic of the creative work of the Babylonian period. This was filled with hope, with a new understanding of God, and

with plans for a renewed nation. The genius of Israel reached new heights in captivity. Beside the irrigation ditches that watered the treeless Babylonian plain, Hebrews sat in their flat-roofed houses and wrote words that saved Israel from extinction. Ezekiel penned his visions, the author of the Holiness Code gave Israel new standards and laws, and it is believed that Second Isaiah composed his matchless spiritual epic.

Harsh words have been used to describe Ezekiel: exclusive, narrow, legalistic, dogmatic. He has been called a fanatical visionary. For all that, almost singlehanded he rescued Israel from extinction and his narrow, legalistic plans preserved her religion from the dangers of the next five hundred years and more. The great religion known as Judaism sprang largely from him and he has fittingly been honoured with the title: Father of Judaism. Dreamer though he was, his vision of a restored Israel was based on sound spiritual insight. A better time will come for Israel, he said, when the Lord transforms men's hearts. Moral and spiritual rebirth is the only soil out of which a better world can grow.

> A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes . . . and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.
>
> EZEKIEL 36. 26, 27, 28

Ezekiel was not alone in his belief that a holy God demanded holiness of His people. Among the exiles there was a priest who was deeply concerned with holiness. Righteousness and love had seemed all-important to the prophets and to the priestly writers of Deuteronomy, but to the unknown priest in exile, holiness was at the very heart of religion. Perhaps he discussed this matter with his fellow exile Ezekiel. It is difficult to say which of the two men influenced the other, for we believe that both lived at about the same time, in the same place, and held similar views. In his house in Babylonia the priest no doubt kept his collection of scrolls. These were a veritable law library and included the ritual laws, the social customs, and the moral precepts of Israel. One day the priest decided to make a compilation of those laws which he thought would insure the holiness of the people. The compilation he wrote is known as the Holiness Code and it can now be read in chapters 17 to 26 of Leviticus. The unknown exiled priest using Deuteronomy as a pattern, wrote the Holiness Code in the form of a sermon of Moses. It contained a variety of laws about such things as: the eating of meat, religious duties, marriage, the priesthood, festivals, real estate, slaves. The idea that holds together these miscellaneous subjects echoes like a refrain throughout the Code:

> And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.
>
> LEVITICUS 20. 26

If the Holiness Code seems like a hodgepodge of museum pieces, we have only to search among its curious old laws and strange customs until we come to this:

> Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
>
> LEVITICUS 19. 18

Here is evidence that there are living precepts in this museum of law. In this verse the ethical requirements of the Old Testament reached their highest point. When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, He combined this seven-word sentence from the Holiness Code with the command to love God and declared:

> There is none other commandment greater than these.
>
> MARK 12. 31

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE GREATEST OF THE HEBREWS

SECOND ISAIAH

THE hearts of the Babylonian exiles were heavy with misgivings. They had seen too much "desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword". Yahweh seemed to have abandoned them. Had He forgotten His people? He had allowed Nebuchadnezzar to burn the Temple. Was Yahweh helpless before Bel and Nebo, the war gods of the Chaldeans? Ezekiel's promise that Yahweh would restore His people to their own land was still only a promise. Perhaps it would never be fulfilled. The new Holiness Code declared God's holiness, but men longed for assurance of His power. And why, if they were indeed Yahweh's own people, had He afflicted them so grievously throughout these many centuries? It was for exiles tormented with doubts like these that an inspired Hebrew wrote a series of magnificent poems. Among his spiritual ancestors were J and E, the author of Deuteronomy, and all the prophets. He inherited their glowing faith. To this inheritance he brought a new radiance, born out of the despair of exile and destined to shine through the centuries.

Who this outstanding spiritual genius was, we do not know; his name has disappeared and his exact place in history is unknown. All we have are his epoch-making poems which now comprise chapters 40 to 55, and perhaps 34, 35, and 56 to 66 as well, in the Book of Isaiah. We usually speak of him as Second Isaiah for his work follows immediately after the prophecies of the eighth-century prophet, the first Isaiah.

In our Bibles only a chapter heading separates the thirty-ninth chapter of Isaiah from the fortieth, but more than a century and a half separated the writing of these two chapters. In the thirty-ninth chapter King Hezekiah and Isaiah, the princely prophet of Jerusalem, are talking together. The time must be about 700 B.C. Then, as we begin to read the fortieth chapter we find that Isaiah's world of old Judah has passed away. Instead of Hezekiah's royal court, the stately Temple, and the altars to false gods we read of "thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction". At the fortieth chapter the voice of the staunch old prophet Isaiah has long been silent and the new voice of Second Isaiah begins to sing on a different note:

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,
Saith your God.
Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
And cry unto her,
That her warfare is accomplished,
That her iniquity is pardoned:
For she hath received of the Lord's hand
Double for all her sins.

ISAIAH 40. 1, 2

Second Isaiah's poems were filled with an exultation that his predecessor did not know. They are rhapsodies, not prophetic denunciations. His words were a light shining in the darkness of exile. Deliverance, he told his fellow exiles, was at hand. Cyrus with his conquering Persian armies would free the Hebrews and end their Babylonian captivity.

The references to Cyrus must have been written about 540 B.C. and, if they are authentic, we may give Second Isaiah a date near this time.

Isaiah said that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was far more than a tribal deity, speaking in the thunder or riding forth to battle for His people. Such ideas belonged to the childhood of their religion. To Second Isaiah God was Creator of heaven, of earth, and of man.

I have made the earth, and created man upon it:
I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens,
And all their host have I commanded.

ISAIAH 45. 12

In these words Second Isaiah describes the power and majesty of God:

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
And meted out heaven with the span,
And comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,
And weighed the mountains in scales,
And the hills in a balance? . . .
Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket,
And are counted as the small dust of the balance:
Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing . . .
It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth,
And the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;
That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain . .
That bringeth the princes to nothing;
He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

ISAIAH 40. 12, 15, 22, 23

He does not argue with the exiles who had lost their faith in God's power, he merely sweeps them along in his triumphant affirmation:

Hast thou not known?
Hast thou not heard,
That the everlasting God, the Lord,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Fainteth not, neither is weary?
There is no searching of his understanding.
He giveth power to the faint;
And to them that have no might be increaseth strength.
Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall:
But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength;
They shall mount up with wings as eagles;
They shall run, and not be weary;
And they shall walk, and not faint.

ISAIAH 40. 28–31

For two hundred years the prophets had preached about one God, but it remained for Second Isaiah to be the first to deny in clear-cut words the existence of other gods:

I am the Lord, and there is none else,
There is no God beside me.

ISAIAH 45. 5

To-day, in order to recapture the tremendous impact of these words on the exiles, we must in imagination stand with them by Babylon's sacred highway and watch the Chaldean conquerors bow low as their sacred idols are carried by in solemn procession. How did Yahweh and Yahweh's defeated people compare with Bel and Nebo and the mighty Chaldeans? As the exiles watched the splendid religious processions of Babylon the daring words of Second Isaiah strengthened their faith:

Before me there was no God formed,
Neither shall there be after me.
I, even I, am the Lord;
And beside me there is no saviour.

ISAIAH 43. 10, 11

Israel had a special relation to God. He had chosen them, and though they had been disobedient, He would pardon them and protect them for ever:

But thou, Israel, art my servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
The seed of Abraham my friend . . .
I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.
Fear thou not; for I am with thee:
Be not dismayed; for I am thy God:
I will strengthen thee;
Yea, I will help thee;
Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

ISAIAH 41. 8–10

But why did God's people have to suffer so many centuries of oppression? In giving his answer to this question Second Isaiah wrote perhaps the most profound chapters of the Old Testament. Israel was God's servant with a mission to accomplish:

> Behold my servant, whom I uphold;
> Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth;
> I have put my spirit upon him:
> He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles . . .
> A bruised reed shall he not break,
> And the smoking flax shall he not quench . . .
> He shall not fail nor be discouraged,
> Till he have set judgment in the earth:
> And the isles shall wait for his law.
>
> ISAIAH 42. 1, 3, 4

The Servant would liberate the oppressed and lead the hungry and thirsty by springs of water. But oppression and affliction would be his lot. Finally, in the greatest religious poem ever written, the fifty-third chapter, the meaning of the Servant's sufferings became clear. God's servant Israel is suffering for all nations, and all the nations in chorus sing:

> Surely he hath borne our griefs,
> And carried our sorrows . . .
> He was wounded for our transgressions,
> He was bruised for our iniquities:
> The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
> And with his stripes we are healed.
> All we like sheep have gone astray;
> We have turned every one to his own way;
> And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
>
> ISAIAH 53. 4–6

Israel lost her national life in captivity, but Second Isaiah restored it to her again on a higher spiritual level. Not for her was there to be an Assyrian triumph or Babylonian prosperity or Persian power. Second Isaiah wrote that Israel's glory was to be in her suffering service for all nations. The fact that Israel rejected that vision does not make it any less remarkable.

> I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles,
> That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.
>
> ISAIAH 49. 6

With Second Isaiah the old national religion burst its narrow bonds and for a brief moment offered its God to all men.

Who wrote the final chapters, 55 to 66, of the Book of Isaiah no one knows. Possibly Second Isaiah himself was their author. Or there may have been a Third Isaiah who in these chapters tried to interpret to a later generation the supreme message of his master.

After five hundred years had passed, on a certain Sabbath day a young teacher stood up to read the Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth. He chose the Isaiah scroll and read from its third section:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> Because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;
> He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,
> To preach deliverance to the captives,
> And recovering of sight to the blind,
> To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
>
> LUKE 4. 18, 19

Rolling up the book, Jesus sat down and began to preach. "This day," He said, "is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Second Isaiah's ancient dreams of God's Servant, so faithfully echoed in the words of Third Isaiah, had at last found their embodiment.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CONSTITUTION OF A SPIRITUAL COMMONWEALTH

The Priestly Code

Second Isaiah saw a new power arising in the east to overthrow the Chaldeans, and he hailed the coming of Cyrus with his invincible Persian army. Cyrus entered Babylon in triumph and freed the Hebrew exiles living there, allowing as many of them as desired to do so to return to their native land. A Persian governor was appointed to rule over them, Palestine being now only one of the provinces within the Persian Empire. The Hebrews were given freedom in religious matters. The moment so joyfully anticipated by Ezekiel and the other exiles had at last arrived, and the glorious return was now taking place.

The Hebrews who returned from exile to rebuild Jerusalem faced the realities of their situation. Persian power dominated the world. There was no hope for a restoration of their old Hebrew kingdom. In spite of appearances there was far too much vitality in their ancient religion for them to forget their proud descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nor did they cease to believe that Yahweh had chosen them to be His people. Though the nation as an independent political state was dead beyond hope of reviving, a religious nucleus still survived. The vision of a new Israel within the Persian Empire began to take shape. The Hebrews began to see it as a holy nation, a spiritual commonwealth, with a high priest in place of a king. The supreme ruler was Yahweh Himself. Such a holy nation had never been seen before. It did not constitute a defiance of Persia, for it was essentially a church or a congregation of God-worshippers and its laws were ritual laws. In fact, the Persian authorities were well content to see the old Hebrew kingdom transformed into the new Church of Israel.

The dream of a new Israel had been Ezekiel's. But its real builders were a group of priests who worked in the Temple library sometime between 520 and 470 B.C. Theirs was a silent kind of building. Instead of the ringing blows of the mason's hammer or the scrape of the carpenter's saw, only the noise of a scratching pen or the murmur of voices broke the stillness of the library where the new Israel began to take shape. Surrounded by old documents and the new rolls containing prophecies of Ezekiel, the Holiness Code, and poems of Second Isaiah, a group of priests were at work writing a constitution for the new commonwealth. They were writing laws, genealogies, and stories showing the origins of religious institutions. The document they composed is known as the Priestly Code. So well are its ideas summed up in the following lines that they might well have been used as the introduction to the whole Code:

> Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.
>
> Exodus 19. 5, 6

It was granted to them to present the noblest idea of God in the Old Testament. The stately first chapter of Genesis with its marvellous account of God and His acts of creation is their work.

> In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
> And the earth was without form, and void;
> And darkness was upon the face of the deep.
> And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
> And God said, Let there be light:
> And there was light.
>
> Genesis 1. 1–3

About five hundred years of theological development separate this majestic chapter written by the priestly writers from the second and third chapters of Genesis, which come down from the beginnings of Hebrew literature. In the ancient second and third chapters of Genesis God walks in a garden in the cool of the day and carries on conversations with Adam and Eve. All this reflects an early period in man's development, when his god is little more than a human being like himself. Years later, when the first chapter of Genesis was written, there had been an immense advance over the old ideas. The writers show us God as a spiritual being who exists beyond earthly limitations. He is the Creator of the universe and at His word the world is formed. He is not like an artisan fashioning man out of dust and woman out of man's rib, instead He creates man and woman by divine command. These conceptions of God on which the Priestly Code is founded were not the invention of the priestly writers. They were, rather, the crystallised essence of centuries of spiritual experience, and embodied the teachings of Amos and the other prophets, of Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and Second Isaiah.

The laws of the Priestly Code form its longest section and are found scattered through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. They deal with the priesthood, festivals, sacrifices, purifications, the Day of Atonement, and various ritual matters. The origin of certain laws is often told in stories, but these cannot compete for drama, characterisation, and vividness with those in the old J and E epics.

The Priestly Code begins on the first page of the Bible. It continues throughout the first six books, being embedded there among other writings. It forms the framework of Genesis, some chapters of Exodus, most of Leviticus and Numbers, and parts of Joshua. Usually dates, measurements, catalogues, and genealogies belong to the Priestly Code. Its style is prosaic, methodical, precise, abounding in stereotyped phrases. The priests, however, were not incapable of writing literary masterpieces, for, as we have seen, the first chapter of Genesis is their work, as is the priestly blessing:

> The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:
> The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:
> The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
> NUMBERS 6. 24–26

The priestly writers were primarily men with legal minds. They were not trying to produce an entertaining book, but to write a body of sacred laws which would preserve the Jews intact as God's own holy people. In this they succeeded. On the day when they put down their pens and wound up the rolls containing the first edition of the Priestly Code there was little to show how effective their constitution would become. Outside in the streets of Jerusalem Malachi, the last of the prophets, was preaching to irreligious crowds. As we shall see in the next chapter, Jerusalem's walls still lay in ruins and the city was scorned among the nations. It needed the energy and vision of a statesman like Nehemiah to rally the people and put the Priestly Code into effect and to establish Judaism. Long after the downfall of the Persian Empire and other empires as well, the religion of the Jews still flourished. It is alive to-day, due in large measure to the fact that among its foundation stones is the Priestly Code.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE MEMOIRS OF A STATESMAN

NEHEMIAH

NEAR the head of the Persian Gulf stood the city of Susa, or Shushan, from which Darius and his successors ruled their vast Persian Empire. There, about 430 B.C., in a room of the magnificent imperial palace a man sat writing his autobiography. The writer was Nehemiah, a Jew descended from one of the families of the Exile. Though his successful career lay in Susa, his heart was in Palestine, the land of his people. When he sat down to write his autobiography, he wrote not of his life at the imperial court but of his years as a Persian governor of Judah.

Nehemiah could hardly have realised what a unique achievement his book was to be. With the exception of certain Egyptian tomb inscriptions, his is the oldest autobiography we have of a person other than a king. Here, perhaps for the first time in history, a man set down in writing the story of his life. His autobiography sweeps away the barrier of twenty-four centuries and brings us face to face with a fifth-century statesman who did more than anyone else to restore self-respect and hope to the little Hebrew community at Jerusalem.

His autobiography opens with the year 444 B.C., when news reached Nehemiah in Susa of the pitiful condition of the Jews in Palestine. The dreams of Ezekiel and Second Isaiah of a glorious return from exile had not materialised. Even the new Temple, built about 516 B.C., through the influence of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, had not revived the nation. Writing in 460 B.C., Malachi painted a picture of a dying church. The news that came to Nehemiah was disturbing. People were poor; fields were heavily mortgaged. Many wealthy and influential Jews had chosen to remain in Babylon. The walls of Jerusalem lay in ruins. City walls were a necessary protection against marauding bands of robbers and Yahweh's city was defenceless without them.

As Nehemiah carried the wine cup to Artaxerxes, the news from Jerusalem depressed him. The King asked why he was sad and Nehemiah replied:

> The city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire. NEHEMIAH 2. 3

His own personal success at the Persian court had not dimmed his patriotism nor extinguished his religion. Courageously he asked Artaxerxes to appoint him governor of the Province of Judah. Before long he was on his way to Jerusalem with a retinue of "captains of the army and horsemen". In his travelling pouch were clay documents stamped with the royal seal. One was a letter to the Persian "governors beyond the River" through whose lands he must travel. This safe-conduct assured him of fresh horses and comfortable lodgings on the long journey. Nehemiah also carried a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the royal forests, authorising him to provide timber for Nehemiah's rebuilding operations. No doubt Nehemiah went armed with his credentials as a duly appointed Persian governor. We may be sure that he kept a sharp eye upon the heavy leather pouches containing his money: gold and silver bars stamped with Persian insignia and also some of the newer Persian coins.

When he reached Jerusalem, Nehemiah went out secretly by night to see for himself the real condition of the walls. In the morning he drew up plans for their rebuilding. He summoned the people together and urged:

> Let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. NEHEMIAH 2. 17

His energy and enthusiasm inspired them and they gave their united reply:

> Let us rise up and build.
> NEHEMIAH 2. 18

The builders worked with their swords girded on, for the Jews had enemies who did not want them to become strong. Sanballat, the ruler of Samaria, Tobiah the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heaped scorn on the workers and tried to halt the building. Trumpeters were stationed to sound an alarm should danger threaten the workers.

Everyone laboured on the walls: priests, district rulers, merchants, perfumers, goldsmiths, and peasant farmers from outlying districts as far away as Jericho. As Nehemiah expressed it, "the people had a mind to work" and within fifty-two days the task was accomplished. For the first time in almost a century and a half Jerusalem was no longer a city to be scorned and despised. Her strong encircling walls restored self-respect to the entire nation.

A later writer, Ben Sira, in his book, Ecclesiasticus, ended his "Praise of Famous Men" with Nehemiah who "raised up for us the walls that were fallen, and set up the gates and the bars, and raised up our ruins again". The walls and all they symbolised were his memorial. In his autobiography we read of other measures he carried through to make Jerusalem the religious centre of Israel. Like the great prophets he sympathised with the misery of the poor and took action to help them. In his zeal to preserve racial purity he excluded from the city people of surrounding districts who were not of Jewish blood and he sternly forbade marriage with foreigners. He reformed Temple worship and ordered people to observe the Sabbath. His policies were all directed toward preserving the Jewish community in Palestine and fencing it off from contamination with foreign blood, foreign ideas, and foreign gods. Nehemiah crystallised Judaism. No longer was Israel's heritage of laws, ethics, and worship in danger of being absorbed and lost in other civilisations. Closing his eyes upon Second Isaiah's vision of Israel's world mission, Nehemiah laboured for a nation and a religion as strong and exclusive as the very walls he had built around Jerusalem.

Many years later an historian, known to us as the Chronicler, found Nehemiah's *Memoirs*. He rewrote and edited some of it, but he also copied long portions of it into his Book of Nehemiah. Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 are probably copied from the roll Nehemiah wrote. In chapters 7, 11, 12 and 13 scholars find that the Chronicler has largely rewritten Nehemiah's work. The whole book as we now have it gives an excellent picture of the man whose practical statesmanship and contagious energy played a decisive part in a crucial moment of Hebrew history. He transformed the discouraged Jews living in the Palestine of his day into a proud community conscious of a high destiny and purpose.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

BREAKING DOWN RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVENESS

JONAH AND RUTH

THE two little books of Jonah and Ruth have more in common than their miniature size. Scholars believe that they were written at about the same time. The books themselves contain no dates, but the ideas they express and other internal evidence reflect the years around 400 B.C. when the Jewish church-state was becoming powerful and the Pentateuch was declared the sacred Law of Israel. It was a time of smug exclusiveness. Israel had her Law from Yahweh and believed herself secure in the divine favour if she were careful to observe every small detail of that Law. Foreign nations did not possess the Law, nor were they Yahweh's people. The strict party of Judaism actually believed foreigners could by their very presence in Jerusalem's Temple contaminate Israel. But there was room in Israel for a difference of opinion, and there were men to whom this narrow view was distasteful. The author of Jonah was one of them. He did not desire to build exclusive walls about his religion, but to tear the walls down. Much of the sublime vision of Second Isaiah was in this unknown author. Instead of arguing about exclusiveness in religion he wrote a tale about it which has become possibly the best-known story of the Old Testament. He spun it out of his own inventive mind, and like storytellers of the East he used marvellous and supernatural events to capture his reader's attention.

It is true that about 780 B.C., in the days of King Jeroboam II, there had been an actual prophet named Jonah. He is mentioned in II Kings 14. 25, and no doubt our author found the name for his fictitious hero there. In much the same way, modern novelists find names for their characters on old tombstones or in the telephone book.

The story of Jonah is fascinating. It includes a journey by sea, a storm, a whale, a gourd, a worm, and a repentant city. Its wonders never cease. A man called to be a prophet runs away. A missionary preaches repentance to a city, hoping all the while that the people will *not* repent and that Yahweh will destroy them! A successful missionary, with a whole repentant city to his credit, simply sits down in the shade of his vine and sulks! Our credulity is strained on every page. A modern editor would

doubtless reject the story with the comment "Impossible". It is, nevertheless, a masterpiece beloved by young and old, and half its charm consists in its very atmosphere of impossibility. It seems incredible that anyone ever thought the story was actual history. There is, however, an account of how Queen Victoria was so troubled by the story that she asked the Dean of Windsor if it really was necessary for her, as a Christian, to believe that Jonah remained alive three days inside the whale.

When we accept Jonah as an ancient tale, we find that its chief glory rests in its inspired teaching. The author implied that the narrow-minded members of the Jewish Church were like Jonah. Like him they wanted to keep Yahweh for themselves, not share Him with all nations. At the end of the story God Himself sharply rebuked Jonah and declared that He deeply cared for a heathen city. It was a protest against the pride and exclusiveness of Judaism.

Like Jonah, the Book of Ruth is also fiction, but it, too, is more than a simple story. On the surface it is a charming idyll of a girl who lived long ago in the time of the "Judges". Between the lines one seems to read a protest against the stern legalism of the fifth century and a plea for tolerance toward people of other races. Nehemiah believed Jewish blood must be kept pure in order that the nation might be holy, and in his day there was a decree that Jewish men must divorce their foreign wives.

The author of Ruth took issue with this harsh and narrow decree. He selected for his heroine a girl from the foreign country of Moab on the eastern side of the Dead Sea. Ruth was a person of gentleness, loyalty, and devotion. The author gave her unforgettably beautiful words to say:

> Entreat me not to leave thee,
> Or to return from following after thee:
> For whither thou goest, I will go;
> And where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
> Thy people shall be my people,
> And thy God my God.
>
> RUTH I. 16

Behind these words we seem to hear the pleading and the tears of foreign wives who were separated by the law from those they loved.

Without arguing his point, the author skilfully closed his tale with the record of Ruth's descendants. This gentle foreigner became the mother of Obed, and Obed's most illustrious grandson was King David. Could anything show more clearly that the character of David's great-grandmother was as pleasing to God as pure Jewish blood? If the children of foreign wives were not true Jews, as the law stated, then what about David? The whole book is a plea for tolerance. The author asks us to believe that a foreigner like Ruth was worthy of being a mother in Israel.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FIRST EDITIONS OF THE BIBLE

The Law and the Prophets

On the day when Nehemiah watched his masons fit the last stone into the walls of Jerusalem, a large part of the Old Testament had already been written. In the library of the Second Temple there were chests filled with rolls of law, legend, history, and prophecy. Some were very old, like the J epic of the tenth or ninth century. Others, like the Priestly Code, were so new that their authors were still alive. Here were the materials out of which the Old Testament would be constructed. They awaited the pens of compilers and editors who would combine the varied documents of Israel's literary and spiritual heritage and publish them in one book. If that had not been done many of these priceless writings would undoubtedly have been lost. We are indebted to the compilers, editors, and scribes who, as it were, packed up the old writings and prepared the volumes in which they were to journey down the centuries. We are also indebted to the unknown people who discerned the spiritual riches in the books and declared them sacred writings.

Perhaps the group of priests who wrote the Priestly Code never disbanded but organised themselves into a corps of editors and compilers. Although we do not know who actually compiled the first edition of the Bible, we believe the work was done in the library of the Second Temple within the new walls of Jerusalem. There, for many years, could be seen scribes bending over their papyrus or parchment rolls copying and editing the ancient texts. If our theories are correct, they did a great amount of sheer copying. Israel's religious experience had been deepened and ripened by the messages of the prophets. The scribes were not content to be mere copyists, nor were they antiquarians eager to preserve old documents simply because they were old. The scribes were primarily teachers of religion filled with the spirit of the prophets and as they copied they remodelled the old documents in the new prophetic spirit. The prophets speak to us primarily from the great books of prophecy, but we can also hear their voices on almost every page of the Pentateuch, which is the superb series of books compiled by the scribes in the Second Temple.

Some of the work of compiling had already been done. The old J epic of 950–850 B.C. with its stories of the patriarchs had long been joined with the E history of 750 B.C. and the resulting J E Document had replaced the separate rolls. Not long after Deuteronomy was found in the old Temple the J E Document had been added to it. In this J E D roll was the nucleus of the Bible. It contained Israel's early history together with her religious and civil laws. To this document of triple origin were to be added the Holiness Code brought from Babylonia, the Priestly Code written for the new Hebrew commonwealth, and other miscellaneous writings. The Priestly Code formed the framework. On the basis of this the editors succeeded in organising the whole sweep of human history, law, religion, and institutions as recorded in their various documents. They wove this extensive body of materials, written over a period of five hundred years, into one great literary and spiritual masterpiece. This was the first Bible.

About 400 B.C. this first edition of the Bible was finished. For all its vast range it was a much shorter book than our Old Testament, for it comprised only Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The name given to this compilation was the Law or Torah. In addition to law, it also contains legends, stories, theology, and history. For centuries it was called the Law of Moses from a mistaken idea that Moses was its author. In the Greek period it was named the Pentateuch from "penta" meaning five and "teuch" meaning roll or book. Because of its length it was a work which had to be divided into five rolls. The Greeks gave to each of the five rolls the names now used for them:

Genesis—The Beginning
Exodus—The Going out
Leviticus—The Law Book of the Levites or Priests
Numbers—The Numbering or Census of the Israelites
Deuteronomy—The Second Giving of the Law

The period when the first Bible was in preparation was a time when there were no copyrights, no quotation marks, and no footnotes. Whatever the compilers wished to borrow from the old documents they were perfectly free to use. Much of their material they copied word for word from the old sources, leaving intact long sections from J, E, and D.

One clue scholars use in discovering the various original documents in the Pentateuch is the clue of style. J is the master storyteller. His style is vivid and concrete. His people seem to be real people. His plots move swiftly. E writes in a more conscious style. He is detailed and less direct than J. Deuteronomy preaches and is persuasive. It employs a distinguished vocabulary and its well-formed sentences have a pleasing rhythm. The authors of the Priestly Code were stiff, precise, legalistic, loading their text with lists, statistics, genealogies, and endless repetitions.

The points of view of the various authors also help to separate their work. J saw the world through the eyes of an ancient Hebrew who found nothing incredible in the idea that God walks and talks with men. A hundred years later E's ideas of God are more advanced. He tells how God reveals himself to men through dreams or by means of angels. The men who wrote Deuteronomy were reformers, and almost every line they wrote is stamped with this purpose. As we have seen, the priestly writers wrote the laws for a spiritual commonwealth. They interpreted Israel's past in the light of fifth-century Judaism. These are some of the clues by which scholars discover the various strata of writings in the Pentateuch.

Thanks to their painstaking labours we are now able to understand many conflicting ideas in these books. From the time of J to that of the priestly writers, men's ideas about God advanced steadily from a crude, materialistic stage to ever more spiritual conceptions. In this advance the prophets were the chief leaders. Many stages in Hebrew religious progress are reflected on the pages of the Pentateuch. We shall misunderstand it if we read it as the work of Moses in the thirteenth century B.C., for it contains the spiritual experiences of many Hebrews. It is a record of God's revelation of Himself, not merely to one man at one moment in history, but to many men throughout five hundred years.

The first edition of the Bible became the charter of Judaism, replacing and superseding the Priestly Code. It embodied Jewish religion, history, philosophy, and laws. It taught men how to worship. It became a handbook of ritual and morals. The Jews consulted it constantly, for they believed that it contained the Law of God. The Greek word for a measuring rod or a standard was "canon". The Jews felt that the Pentateuch measured up to the standards for divinely inspired writing and they declared it to be canonical. From the moment the Pentateuch was set apart from all other books as a special, sacred, canonical body of writing its contents became crystallised. Before 400 B.C. its documents had been freely changed. From about 400 B.C. when it was canonised, its text was carefully guarded from changes or errors. Our Pentateuch is substantially the same book declared to be canonical in 400 B.C.

The Samaritan sect or church which split off from orthodox Judaism about this time took to their new Temple on Mount

Gerizim a copy of the Bible of that day. The Samaritan Bible even now contains only the Pentateuch. But the Jewish Church did not close its Bible of 400 B.C. against later additions. The historical books from Joshua to Kings contained, as we know, far more than bare history. They were basically religious. Israel believed that God controlled history. The historical series had been compiled from older sources in order to illustrate the great prophetic teaching that God stands behind history and requires righteousness and obedience of Israel. The books were both patriotic and religious. They were also very popular. By 200 B.C. the whole series was declared canonical and given an honoured place beside the Pentateuch which for two hundred years had been a holy book. The historical series was classified as the Former Prophets and issued in four volumes: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings.

Meanwhile the writings of the prophets from Amos to Malachi were being collected and edited. About 200 B.C. they also, like the Former Prophets, were declared canonical and issued in four volumes: Isaiah (including Second Isaiah), Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve. This last was a collection of the twelve books in our Old Testament from Hosea to Malachi. Unfortunately, the books were not arranged in chronological order beginning with Amos and ending with Joel. We would have arranged them thus: first, the great eighth-century pioneers, Amos, Hosea, Micah; next, the voices of triumph and despair, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah; then, the post-Exilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Malachi; and finally, the prophet of the locust plague and the Day of Judgment, Joel. There would have been only eleven prophets in our collection, for Jonah, being merely a story of a prophet, we would have put in another group.

Later the Jewish Church added to the Law and the Prophets a third collection of books known as the Writings. They formed a varied and fascinating group whose origins we shall now explore. It was not until the beginning of the Christian era that the Writings were given a place among the sacred Scriptures. When Jesus attended the synagogue school in Nazareth, the Bible was called the Law and the Prophets, and on more than one occasion He refers to it as such. Though the Psalms were not at that time included in the Bible, they were so well known from their use in Temple worship that they were almost in the same class with the sacred Writings. It was not until A.D. 90, however, that the Psalms together with the other Writings were formally declared to be canonical. With the Writings the Old Testament canon closed.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

AN OLD TESTAMENT MASTERPIECE

JOB

MANY people think that the most beautiful and brilliant book of the Old Testament is Job. Critics place it among the world's supreme literary achievements. There is nothing quite like it in the Bible. It is a story, a poem, a drama, a volume of philosophy, a description of nature, a guide to morals, and a religious masterpiece all in one. No wonder the book is difficult to classify and seems to belong to a shelf by itself.

Job's place in the lineage of the Bible is also hard to discover, for there is almost nothing in its pages to show who its author was nor when he lived. It has even been suggested that Moses wrote it about 1200 B.C.! But of course this is highly improbable. The various dates modern scholars give it differ by as much as five hundred years. The author's nationality has been questioned, for the background of the story seems to lack definite Jewish features and to be characteristic of the country of Edom. For this and other reasons some think the author may not have been a Jew at all but an Edomite sage. Perhaps as reasonable a guess as any among all these conflicting opinions is that Job was written by an unknown Jew about 400 B.C. This would make it a contemporary of the completed Pentateuch and of Ruth and Jonah.

Like Jonah and Ruth, Job also voices a protest. As we have seen, there was room for a variety of opinions, and orthodox Judaism, with its Temple, its priesthood, and its holy Book, did not stifle original thinking. Job contains some of the most original and profound thinking in the Old Testament. The theme of the book is the ageless problem of suffering. Its author dared to challenge the orthodox view which said that misery, wretchedness, and sorrow were God's way of punishing sin. The author of Job rebelled against their theory. He found it untrue to the facts, for many blind, crippled, hungry, and bereaved people led blameless lives, while the prosperous, the well-fed, and the healthy were often sinners. He could find no reward for goodness and no just punishment for wrongdoing here on earth. Accordingly he set out to explain his ideas.

Instead of writing a dull treatise, the author, like the writers of Jonah and Ruth, chose an original method of presenting his ideas. There was an ancient folk tale circulating in his day about a man named Job who, though innocent, endured terrible afflictions. In order to bring life and action to his deep subject, the author borrowed the old tale and used it as the framework of his book. It provided a prologue and epilogue and it introduced the chief character Job. The prologue and epilogue are in prose; the rest of the book in poetry.

Job was a wealthy patriarch of Edom, "perfect and upright, and one that feared God" and turned away from evil. In one day he lost all his oxen and asses, his sheep and camels. His servants were murdered and his ten sons and daughters were crushed to death when their house collapsed. Job himself fell ill with a terrible disease. No wonder his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were speechless when they came to comfort him and "sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great".

From here on the book is written in magnificent poetry. The seven days of silence are followed by a series of dialogues between Job and his three friends. Job opens the debate with a poem in which he curses the day he was born. The three friends speak, one after another, and Job replies to each one. This cycle of dialogue is repeated three times. A fourth man named Elihu suddenly appears in the thirty-second chapter, but the five chapters in which he harangues Job were probably not part of the original composition and must be considered as the additions of a later writer who was offended at Job's speeches and toned down the book so that it could be read by orthodox Jews.

The three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, all try to comfort Job. They tell him that there is discipline in suffering. They advise him to seek forgiveness and they tell him there is still hope for him. But all three of his friends hold the conventional idea that Job's suffering must be the penalty for his sins.

> . . . Who ever perished, being innocent?
> Or where were the righteous cut off? Job 4. 7

Job bitterly denies their indirect accusation that he is guilty and deserves punishment. He calls them "miserable comforters". Everywhere he sees innocent people suffering and the wicked prospering. Surely calamity is no sign of the Lord's disapproval.

His friends are shocked as Job pours out his grief and accuses the Lord of cruelty and injustice. He believes that he is being

punished unjustly and in an agony of spirit he cries out that God has abandoned him. Yet Job refuses to "curse God, and die". He still desires to find Him again and enter into fellowship with Him. In the midst of bitter suffering he cries out his faith in God "I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job 19. 25). In a flash of insight Job sees that God Himself will be his ultimate champion and vindicator.

After the long debate between Job and his friends, we come to the twenty-eighth chapter with its matchless poem on wisdom.

> But where shall wisdom be found?
> And where is the place of understanding? . . .
> The depth said, It is not in me:
> And the sea saith, It is not with me.
> It cannot be gotten for gold,
> Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.
> Job 28. 12, 14, 15

From here the book continues to its climax. In three superb chapters, 29, 30, 31, Job tells of his former happiness and his present misery. He concludes by describing his code of living. It is the code of a gentleman and its standards are in many respects higher than the requirements of the Pentateuch or the teachings of the prophets. When we read that he had not "made gold my hope", nor "rejoiced at the destruction of him that hateth me", we know that we are face to face with one of the noblest men of the Old Testament. With the challenge, "Behold, my desire is, that the Almighty would answer me," Job rests his case. Almost breathlessly we await God's reply.

By-passing the five chapters of Elihu's speeches, we come to the majestic poems of the final chapters, 38 to 40, where the Lord "answered Job out of the whirlwind". In a series of tremendous questions God showed Job the limits of his human knowledge.

> Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
> Declare, if thou hast understanding . . .
> Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?
> Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
> When the morning stars sang together,
> And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
> Job 38. 4, 6, 7

Question after question piles up the evidence of God's infinite power and wisdom and makes Job see his own insignificance. How had he dared to question divine justice? Who was Job to declare that God should always reward the good and punish the evildoer? Job repented his rebellious words. His estrangement from God ended when he heard the voice from the whirlwind. He had been granted a deep, personal experience of God and that was enough for him.

> I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:
>   But now mine eye seeth thee.
> Wherefore I abhor myself,
>   And repent in dust and ashes.
>
> JOB 42. 5, 6

In the mighty fact of God's nearness, Job's heart found the peace "which passeth all understanding". The problem of why the innocent suffer still remained a mystery, as it does to this day. Job was content to leave this problem unanswered, for his experience of God convinced him that divine justice was deeper than man could understand. Like Job, modern man has found in faith the only answer to the otherwise insoluble problem of suffering.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

WISE MEN OF ISRAEL

PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES

A FAMILIAR figure in the ancient world was the sage or wise man with his store of pithy sayings and his reputation for wisdom. Egypt and Babylonia had their wise men; the sages of Edom and Greece were famous; and Israel, too, had her teachers of wisdom. They were quite different from the prophets who thundered: "Thus saith the Lord." Though they lacked the grandeur of such spiritual statesmen as Hosea or Isaiah, the wise men were highly regarded. They were professors of the art of living and addressed themselves to individuals rather than to the nation. They taught young men the rules of good conduct and how to live successfully. In any age their lectures would have been popular, for they spoke on such subjects as: How To Be Happy, How to Succeed in Business, The Value of Wisdom, The Ideal Wife, What Life is About. From their store of worldly wisdom the sages taught the virtues of honesty, thrift, industry, chastity, truthfulness, and regard for others. Unlike the author of Job, most of the wise men taught that God would reward these virtues with long life, happiness, and prosperity.

In their day the sages were considered to be very learned men. They were able to read Hebrew as well as other languages, and their teaching material was drawn not only from their own observation and experience but also from an international fund of traditional wisdom. They were, moreover, literary craftsmen, clever with words, possessed of a keen sense of form and rhythm, and skilled in the writing of proverbs, sayings, and maxims. Each wise man must have taken pride in his own collection of proverbs, improving and polishing them until his young men students exclaimed over their brevity, imagination, and beauty. The wise men would have found much in common with Confucius, the great Chinese sage of the sixth century B.C., and had they been able to understand his language they would doubtless have borrowed many of his wise sayings.

About 400 B.C. someone decided to publish an anthology of wisdom. He chose eight collections of proverbs and sayings and published them in a single volume. This is the Book of Proverbs.

From Proverbs, with its practical help in living a good life, we come to the cynical volume entitled Ecclesiastes. It is a strange book to find in the Bible, for its teaching that human life is futile runs counter to almost everything else in the Old Testament.

The writer opened his book with the disheartening statement that "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1. 2). He taught the young men of Jerusalem that "all things are full of weariness" (1. 8) and that life has no meaning. Wherever he looked he seemed to see blind chance ruling the world and he said that:

> The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.
> ECCLESIASTES 9. 11

He "commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry" (8. 15). In spite of its unrelieved despair Ecclesiastes' book is charmingly written and its description of old age and death in chapters 11. 9 to 12. 7 is a masterpiece:

> Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
> ECCLESIASTES 12. 6, 7

Perhaps the sentence added by a pious editor at the end of the roll finally won for this strange and unorthodox book a place in the canon:

> Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.
> ECCLESIASTES 12. 13

Besides Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes the Jews had other volumes of wisdom literature. Among these were Ecclesiasticus and The Wisdom of Solomon, which as we shall see in another chapter, were not to become part of the Old Testament canon, but were preserved in the Apocrypha.

CHAPTER TWENTY

ISRAEL'S GOLDEN TREASURY

PSALMS

MANY Bibles have a worn section exactly in the middle of the volume where the book tends to open of its own accord and the edges of the pages are no longer crisp. This is not surprising, for here is found the best-loved of all Old Testament books, the Book of Psalms. From about 100 B.C., when this anthology of religious poetry was finally completed, it has remained one of the most popular of books. On its pages people like ourselves left the record of their joys and sorrows, their faith and despair, their longing for God and their praises to Him. As Martin Luther said in his second Preface to the Psalter, here we "can look into the hearts of all the saints". Israel's prophets, lawmakers, historians, and sages often appear to us as strange and remote men of a vanished civilisation. But with her psalmists we feel at home, for they seem to be like our own brothers.

Though we do not know the names of the psalmists nor exactly where and when they lived, some of their songs show us what sort of men they were. A few of them may have been shepherds guarding their flocks on the Judean hillsides. At night wrapped in their cloaks they looked up at the stars and tried to find words for the beauty of the heavens and their faith in God. Perhaps a shepherd poet composed the first version of such lines as:

> When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
> The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
> What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
> And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
> PSALM 8. 3, 4

And who but one to whom the shepherd's life was familiar could have written the psalm beginning: "The Lord is my shepherd"?

Other psalms beat out the rhythm of marching feet and may have been composed by people on their way up to Jerusalem for the Passover.

> I was glad when they said unto me,
> Let us go into the house of the Lord.
> PSALM 122. 1

Singing a song like this would surely help the pilgrims forget the dust and heat and weariness of the long road up to the Holy City. Year after year bands of pilgrims would sing the song, improving it from time to time, until at length so many had worked on it that no one could be called its author. It became as anonymous as a traditional folk song.

Some idea of the impressiveness of the Temple services which the pilgrims attended when they reached Jerusalem is given in this description from Ecclesiasticus:

> Then shouted the sons of Aaron, and sounded the silver trumpets, and . . . all the people together hasted, and fell down to the earth upon their faces to worship their Lord God Almighty, the most High. The singers also sang praises with their voices, with great variety of sounds was there made sweet melody.
>
> ECCLESIASTICUS 50. 16–18

The silver trumpets no longer sound and the sweet melody has perished together with the guilds of singers who sang praises with their voices, but in many a psalm we hear an echo of the words in which the priests and people praised the Lord. Perhaps one of these is Psalm 95 which may have belonged to one of the Temple hymnbooks.

> O come, let us sing unto the Lord:
> Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
> Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving,
> And make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.

Though all the tunes to which the psalms were once sung have perished, we know that the ancient Temple music was elaborate. In the last psalm, the 150th, there is a catalogue of musical instruments: trumpets, psalteries, harps, timbrels, stringed instruments, pipes, loud cymbals, and high-sounding cymbals.

The Book of Psalms contains a selection of the hymns used in public worship as well as many personal prayers and meditations. Among the psalmists were pious Jews who wrote, not so much for the guilds of singers nor for the multitudes worshipping in the Temple, as for those who carried on their devotions in the privacy of their own homes. Psalm 51 with its cry of "a broken and a contrite heart" belongs to the treasury of personal devotion. We shall be only partially correct if we describe Psalms as the Hymnbook of the Second Temple. It contains so many psalms of a personal nature that it may well have been used by the faithful Jew as a prayer book for his own devotions.

Among the psalmists of Israel, the shepherds, pilgrims, priests, singers, and devout men, there is not one whose name we know. Many a psalm has an introductory note which seems to tell the author and the occasion for which it was written, but these notes are thought to be late additions and unreliable. Various collections of psalms once bore the title: Psalms of David. When an individual psalm was taken from one of these collections it was labelled: "A Psalm of David". The word "David" in connexion with a psalm cannot be taken as a statement of its authorship but as a gesture of dedication. Probably none of the psalms were composed by David, for the words in which they are written and the ideas they express belong to a period six hundred years and more after Israel's royal poet died. Just as the Pentateuch was attributed to Moses and Proverbs to Solomon, so, many psalms bear David's name, reminding us that to the Jews David was the symbol of poetry and song.

Monotheism is the rock on which the psalms are founded. The long struggle against the "other gods" was all but won, and the faith of the prophets in one God, Yahweh, is the faith of the psalmists. They praise Him and offer Him thanks for His loving-kindness and righteousness. His majesty and His mystery inspire them to write some of the noblest lines in all poetry. In such a large collection we inevitably find different points of view, some cruder and less spiritual than others. Some of the psalmists glorify the Temple sacrifices, while others join the prophets in protesting against these rites. Some are satisfied with God's justice, while others, like Job, are perplexed to see innocent people suffering. Rampant nationalism that curses Israel's enemies is side by side with a belief like that of Second Isaiah's that God is Lord of all mankind. Here and there we find moods that are unworthy of Israel at her best: self-satisfaction, complaint, revenge. But from first to last the dominant note of the psalms is praise and thanksgiving to God and confidence in the Lord of Israel.

> He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High
> Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
> I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress:
> My God; in Him will I trust.
>
> PSALM 91. 1, 2

The poetry of Psalms lends itself remarkably well to translation into English. Fortunately rhyme, which can seldom be carried over into another language, was not used by Hebrew poets. They achieved their beautiful effects by repeating the thought of one line in the second line, or by using the second line to contrast with or to complete the idea in the first line. Hebrew poetry flies, as it were, upon two wings.

The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handywork.

PSALM 19. 1

Even when the parallel construction is more complicated, we can still hear the double beat of repetition or contrast or completion which carries the verse forward.

The Lord is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?

PSALM 27. 1

There is a further reason for the successful translation of the Hebrew psalms into English. Abstract ideas are difficult to translate, but the Hebrew poets did not use these. Instead, they expressed their ideas in concrete, vivid pictures. The psalms are not a museum of religious emotions with the exhibits carefully labelled and kept lifelessly under glass. They are, rather, a living collection where everything moves and breathes and cries and sings. Hebrew poets were incapable of smothering an idea with abstract words. They could not have written this: "In connection with the Divine Being it is fairly reasonable to assume that men can rely upon such a Being for leadership, for protection, and for provision for human subsistence." They said the same thing briefly, clearly, unforgettably:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

PSALM 23. 1

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE LITERARY HARVEST OF A CENTURY

CHRONICLES, EZRA, NEHEMIAH, SONG OF SOLOMON, DANIEL, ESTHER

THE final books of the Old Testament were written in a little more than a century from 250 B.C. to 125 B.C., the same century that produced Ecclesiastes with its cynicism and many of the psalms with their triumphant faith. To this century belong the four-volume history comprising I and II Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; the anthology of love poetry known as the Song of Solomon; the stirring apocalypse of Daniel; and the historical romance of Esther. In addition, a number of the books of the Apocrypha were written during these years. Surely all these were a rich harvest to spring from the worship, the human joys, and the political turmoils of Jewish life in the third and second centuries B.C.

Modern scholars think it is probable that one man wrote the books of I and II Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah (exclusive of the chapters from Nehemiah's Memoirs). No one contributed more pages to the Old Testament than this author and no one attempted to cover such a vast sweep of history as he did. His work extends from Adam to the Persian period in the fourth century B.C. The writer of this ambitious history is known to us simply as the Chronicler, a name suggesting ink and pens and a scholar poring over old rolls. In his own day, however, the Chronicler may have been famous not so much for his literary gifts as for his beautiful voice. It is almost certain that he was a Levite belonging to one of the guilds of singers who sang the psalms in the Temple. The glory of the Temple filled his mind and he seems to have written his four-volume book as an historical background to the laws, the ritual, and the music of Jerusalem's Second Temple.

Few readers have patience to follow the Chronicler through his endless genealogies and they find his statistics incredible. We are staggered by his assertion that David's army numbered a million and a half men (I Chronicles 21. 5) and that the equivalent of three billion gold dollars (I Chronicles 22. 14) were contributed to the Temple building fund. Can these huge statistics really be about David's reign? His portrait of David is so highly coloured that David's biographer would hardly recognise his friend who rose from a shepherd boy to be a king of Israel. This is not the David we know, but a stained-glass figure of the founder of an elaborate ecclesiastical organisation. According to the Chronicler, David did little during his reign but capture Jerusalem, transport the Ark there, and collect materials for the building of the Temple. On every page we find anachronisms. The account of music and worship in David's reign is really a picture of the Jewish Church of the Chronicler's day, nearly seven hundred years after David. He magnifies the function of the Levites and singers to such an extent that at one point they overcome two armies merely by singing hymns (II Chronicles 20. 21–31)! Indeed, there is so much singing in the Chronicler's books that we wonder at times whether this is history or opera.

In the Song of Solomon there is singing also, but it is of a different kind from that of the Chronicler. Here are no choirs nor trumpets nor praises to Yahweh. This book is a collection of love songs, and religion has no place in it. Against a background of Palestine in the springtime these poems celebrate the love of a man and a woman and were perhaps written to be sung at wedding festivities. The songs in this anthology seem to come from several poets whose vocabulary and style of writing indicate that they lived about 250 B.C. Solomon's name in the title does not, of course, indicate that he is the author and this book can no more be attributed to him than can Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. These poems contain beautiful Oriental imagery, but they are definitely love songs and one wonders why they were included among the sacred Writings. Perhaps this came about when Jewish religious leaders went beyond the actual meaning of the words and interpreted them allegorically. According to their interpretation, Yahweh was the bridegroom and the Congregation of Israel was the bride. These allegorical interpretations raised the Songs into the class of religious works and Rabbi Akiba rebuked the young men of his day who sang them as love ditties in the wine shops. The Christian Church also looked beyond the literal meaning of the words and, as the headings in the English translation of 1611 show, interpreted the poems in terms of Christ and the Church. To-day we take the same view of the poems as did the young men who sang them in the wine shops. To most of us they are valuable, not as religious meditations, but as examples of Hebrew secular poetry.

We are fortunate to have inherited from the past such lovely poems as this one about spring:

For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
And the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

SONG OF SOLOMON 2. 11–13

The last religious book of the Old Testament was written nearly a hundred years after the Chronicler's four volumes. This is Daniel, which appeared in 165 B.C. during the bitter Maccabean revolt. At this time the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, tried to force Greek culture and religion upon Palestine and to stamp out all traces of Judaism. He plundered the Temple of its golden treasures and desecrated it by offering heathen sacrifices to Zeus upon its altar. The author of Daniel writes of this as "the abomination that maketh desolate". Antiochus Epiphanes ordered loyal Jews to be executed and he burned the books of the Law. The Jews met this first religious persecution in their history with courage and steadfastness. Some deserted to the Greek side, but many joined the desperate uprising of Judas Maccabeus, whose story is told in the Apocrypha in I and II Maccabees. The author of Daniel belonged to a group of loyal Jews, the Hasidim, who resisted persecution. His book was a trumpet call to the Jews to stand fast in their faith and trust in God's unfailing power. The first six chapters contain the story of a Jewish hero, Daniel, who successfully resisted the older tyranny of Persia, and withstood every test of his faith. Though Daniel is supposed to have lived at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, the trials he met were really those of the author's own day when the Jews were suffering under Antiochus Epiphanes. The Hasidim must have read with keen interest the stories of the burning fiery furnace and the lions' den, and of the handwriting on the wall at Belshazzar's feast when a king of old who persecuted the Jews was condemned. These stories quickened their hope and faith that God would protect and reward their loyalty as he had Daniel's.

Chapters 7 to 12 contain a series of visions in which the author comments on the terrible persecutions of the Jews of his day. He predicts the end of foreign rule and the triumph of God's faithful people. This type of writing is called an apocalypse. It is different from prophecy out of which it grew. Prophecy summons people to righteous living; an apocalypse encourages people to endure their present suffering by showing them that their reward and deliverance is at hand. Prophecy has its feet on the ground. An apocalypse is in the clouds. The prophets stood up and spoke their own message. The authors of the apocalypses wrote anonymously and attributed their work to the distant past. An apocalypse is visionary, unreal, fantastic, abounding in symbols. Daniel is the Old Testament apocalypse as Revelation is the New Testament apocalypse.

Written in the heat of a desperate struggle, the Book of Daniel matched the flaming zeal and courage of the Maccabean patriots. Even if they died they could hope that in the end God's cause would gloriously triumph. Daniel painted a background for the violent acts of the Maccabean revolt and this background is the "scenery of eternity".

Esther, the last Old Testament book to be written, is not a religious book but an historical romance that at times reminds us of the *Arabian Nights*. As soon as it was written by an unknown author in Jerusalem about 125 B.C. it became popular. Its heroine is a beautiful Jewish girl who became Queen of Persia and risked her life to save her people. It contains royal banquets, a beauty contest, an assassination plot, trickery, and revenge. Though the story opens with a feast lasting the incredible number of 180 days and continues with other exaggerations, it holds the reader's attention with its well-drawn characters, its lively dialogue, and its dramatic suspense.

It is surprising to find such a book in the Bible. Search as we will through its ten chapters, we shall nowhere find in it the name of God. Esther is the only book in the Bible which does not mention the name of God. Patriotism, not religion, is its theme. It is a patriotism which at the end degenerates into revenge and exults when seventy-five thousand helpless enemies are slaughtered. Possibly this book was written to introduce a new patriotic holiday, the Feast of Purim.

Of course the story of Esther is fiction, not fact, for history knows nothing of a Jewish Queen of Persia, and Esther herself must be placed among the imaginary heroines of literature. Though King Ahasuerus probably represents Xerxes and the details of Persian life and customs are authentic, the book does not belong among the histories but with such other works of fiction as Ruth, Jonah, and Daniel. Lest we judge the period that produced Esther too harshly, we must remember that while this story represents its popular fiction many of the psalms represent its religion.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE BOOKS THAT WERE LEFT OUT

THE APOCRYPHA

IN 200 B.C. the Hebrew Bible consisted of the thirteen books of the Law and the Prophets. Before long other books began to associate with these sacred Scriptures. In 132 B.C. Ben Sira's grandson wrote a preface to his Greek translation of his grandfather's book, Ecclesiasticus. In this he spoke of "the law and the prophets and other books of our fathers". Again he said "the law itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books". Though these remarks do not tell us exactly what the "rest of the books" were, they do provide us with our earliest clue to the fact that the Hebrew Bible of the second century B.C. had a third section. This shadowy "rest of the books" was to become known as the Writings. Unlike the books of the other two divisions which seem to have been canonised as an entire group, the books of the Writings attained their sacred status one by one. The whole group was not clearly defined until A.D. 90 when the Council of Jamnia drew up a definitive list of the sacred Scriptures. Writing about the time of the Council of Jamnia the author of II Esdras speaks of ninety-four books. Of these, he said, the Lord commanded that the first twenty-four be published openly, but that the other seventy be kept hidden. The twenty-four books were the canonical books of Hebrew Scripture and consisted of the five books of the Law (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), the four former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), the four Latter Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve, among whom were numbered Joel and Jonah), and finally, the eleven books of the Writings (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah). These twenty-four books of the Hebrew canon, when we count each double book as two books, and each of the Twelve as one book, become the thirty-nine volume library of our Old Testament.

What, then, of the seventy volumes Esdras was commanded to keep hidden? Many of them have naturally been lost in the course of centuries. A surprising number still exist and a few have been discovered in recent years. This entire group of books is referred to as the Pseudepigrapha and it contains such books as: *Jubilees, The Martyrdom of Isaiah, Enoch, and Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.* These books are chiefly of interest to scholars. Though they must all have been popular in their own day, they were not considered sacred books.

There is, however, a curious little group of books lying between the twenty-four books of Hebrew Scripture and the large collection of the Pseudepigrapha. This collection is the Apocrypha. Throughout the years it has been tossed back and forth like a ball between the Scriptures on one side and the Pseudepigrapha on the other. Even to-day the game of the Apocrypha is still being played and not everyone agrees just where it belongs.

The contents of the Apocrypha differ from one list to another, but the books traditionally contained in the English versions number fourteen:

I Esdras
II Esdras
Tobit
Judith
Rest of the Book of Esther
Wisdom of Solomon
Ecclesiasticus
I Maccabees
II Maccabees
Baruch, including the Epistle of Jeremy
Additions to the Book of Daniel:
  Song of the Three Children
  Susanna
  Bel and the Dragon
Prayer of Manasses

These books were written in the last period of Hebrew literature, from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 100. Early ones like I Esdras, Tobit, Ecclesiasticus and Judith are contemporaries of such works as Chronicles, Daniel, Esther, and many of the psalms. The latest books like Wisdom, Baruch, and II Esdras are contemporaries of the letters of Paul and the four Gospels. The books of the Apocrypha form a sort of bridge between the Old and the New Testaments.

In these books we see Jewish literary genius in all its many-sidedness. Here are the romances of Tobit, Judith, and Susanna. I Esdras is a rewriting of history similar to Chronicles, while Maccabees is history itself. It tells the story of the heroic struggle led by Judas Maccabeus to win religious freedom for the Jews. Wisdom literature is represented in Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon. Baruch is prophecy; Bel and the Dragon is myth. II Esdras is a collection of apocalypses. The Prayer of Manasses is liturgy and was at one time used in the Christian Church.

The four hundred years from 300 B.C. to 100 A.D. when these books were written were marked by violence and war. The Jews often divided into hostile parties and fought among themselves.

They resisted the efforts of their Greek conquerors to make them adopt Hellenistic civilisation. They suffered under and rebelled against Roman misrule. Many a time they heard in their streets the tramp of foreign soldiers. They knew the bitterness of paying unjust taxes to a foreign power. Throughout these four unruly centuries there were, however, moments of calm when men had a chance to write their message. Most of the Writings and all of the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha were written during this period. In these years there must have been a large reading public, not only in Palestine, but among the Jews of the Dispersion, who eagerly seized upon each new book as it came out. The literature produced was more varied and extensive than that of any other period.

Throughout the western world from Persia to Spain lived colonies of the Jews of the Dispersion, who far outnumbered their kindred in the homeland. Many were descendants of sixth-century exiles who had never returned to Palestine. In Egypt about one in every eight people was a Jew and there were many synagogues in the beautiful Greek city of Alexandria built by the Ptolemies at the mouth of the Nile. The chief synagogue was a stately basilica adorned with double rows of pillars. Not to have seen this building, one rabbi declared, was never to have seen the glory achieved by Israel. A human voice was lost in the vastness of this synagogue and a flag had to be waved when the congregation was expected to say "Amen". Alexandria in those days was a Greek-speaking city and many Alexandrian Jews understood no other language. When the Law and the Prophets were read in the synagogue, they had to be followed by a translation or explanation in Greek. A Greek translation of the Bible became a necessity.

There is a charming legend about how the Pentateuch was first translated into Greek. In Alexandria the Ptolemies collected a library containing more than half a million rolls. It was Callimachus, the librarian at Alexandria, who declared: "A big book is a big nuisance", and introduced the custom of dividing a long bulky roll into "books" or "parts", each of which could be written on a shorter, handier roll. Between 285 and 246 B.C., King Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt became active in enlarging his vast library. At that time there was no Greek translation of the Hebrew Law in existence. So much is history. Ptolemy sent to the High Priest in Jerusalem asking for six Hebrew scholars from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to be sent to Egypt to translate the Scriptures. When seventy scholars arrived in Egypt each one was given a separate cell where he might work alone. For seventy days not a word was heard from the seventy scholars. Then all at once arose from all the cells a mighty shout. Seventy voices in chorus shouted, "Amen!" and the seventy translations were completed. Wonderful to relate, when all the manuscripts were compared all were found to be identical! This story, told perhaps to invest the Greek version with the same aura of sacredness its Hebrew parent text possessed, gave a name to the new Greek version. It was called the Septuagint, meaning "of seventy" and its name, as well as its modern designation, LXX, honours the seventy legendary scholars. The great library at Alexandria was burned by the mob that attacked Julius Caesar's forces in that city in 47 B.C. No doubt that fire destroyed documents which could have told us the true story of the Septuagint.

From the very beginning the Old Testament read in the Christian Church and quoted by Paul and the evangelists was usually the Septuagint Greek Bible containing, no doubt, the Law, the Prophets, the Writings, and the books of the Apocrypha as well. We have proof of this, for Bibles based on the Septuagint have come down to us and these usually contain the Apocrypha. Moreover, in controversies with their Jewish opponents, the Christians often quoted from the Apocrypha.

This was intolerable to the Jews. They realised, moreover, a danger to the Jewish faith in the new Christian books then being written. These might easily become part of the Scriptures, as indeed they have in the Christian Church. The Jews felt that something must be done to set limits to the holy books. Those that lived in Palestine believed that true inspiration ended with the prophetic age in the time of Ezra. No one writing after that, they decided, could be truly inspired. The Jews in Alexandria were more liberal in their interpretation of inspiration. They believed that the Divine Spirit was still active in the minds of living writers and that in moments of clear insight or high exaltation these writers could produce inspired writings. But it was the Palestine Jews with their narrower theory of inspiration who decreed what the canon of the Hebrew Scripture was to be. This was done under the leadership of Johanan ben Zakkai at the Council of Jamnia about A.D. 90. The Alexandrian Jews might continue to read their Septuagint containing the books of the Apocrypha, but for the Jews of Palestine the sacred canon included only twenty-four books. Anathema was pronounced on anyone who "brings together in his house more than twenty-four books" and a warning was issued that such a person would "have no part in the world to come".

Thus the Apocrypha were abandoned by the Jews. The Christians, meanwhile, continued to read these books in their

Septuagint version. In Rome the walls of the catacombs where the early Christians hid from persecution were often decorated with scenes from Tobit, Judith, and Maccabees.

When the great Latin translation of the Bible known as the Vulgate was made by Jerome about A.D. 400, he objected to the inclusion of the Apocrypha. He had visited Palestine and there Jewish scholars had taught him Hebrew and showed him that the Apocrypha were not part of the Hebrew canon. Jerome was impressed by their arguments, but he did not succeed in persuading the Roman Church to reject the Apocrypha. To this day the Apocrypha form an integral part of the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church. In its English translation, known as the Douay Version, the Apocryphal books are scattered through The Old Testament wherever they seem to belong and they are specifically declared to be canonical.

The Authorised Version of 1611 contained the Apocrypha, but as early as 1629 editions were printed in which they were left out. The Puritan party in England was opposed to the Apocrypha, which they found troublesome in view of their doctrine that every word of Scripture was divinely inspired. Finally, in 1827 the British and Foreign Bible Society refused to appropriate their funds to print the Apocrypha. Some old family Bibles include the disputed collection, but few Bibles printed to-day contain it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

THE PORTABLE FATHERLAND OF THE JEWS

The Hebrew Scriptures

The day in 621 B.C. when King Josiah listened to the reading of Deuteronomy was a significant one for Israel. From that time on a book was enshrined at the heart of the Jewish religion. As we have seen, other books were soon attracted into the sacred orbit of Deuteronomy, and guilds of writers copied and edited a library of twenty-four books worthy to stand beside the Deuteronomic kernel of the Bible. Though Jerusalem with her Temple, priesthood, and sacrifices dominated Judaism, the sacred books began to exercise a profound influence. Scribes and interpreters of the Law became men of importance, for the average person wanted to hear what the Scriptures contained. Between 400 and 150 B.C. the synagogue originated as a place where people assembled to hear the Pentateuch read and explained. Only in the Temple at Jerusalem might sacrifices be offered, but every town and village in the land had its synagogue where people gathered to listen to the sacred Scriptures.

The story of the Samaritan Sect which broke off from orthodox Judaism about 400 B.C. shows how important the Bible was in the religion of that day. The Samaritan Sect was founded by a group of Jews who were excluded from the Temple at Jerusalem, probably because they had married foreign wives. Angered by this they went to Samaria where they built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. To this temple they carefully brought from Jerusalem a copy of the Bible of their day which in 400 B.C. consisted only of the Pentateuch. The Samaritan Bible never grew beyond these five books. When Jesus visited the Samaritan town of Sychar, a woman He met at the well was surprised that He, a Jew, spoke to her a Samaritan, "for", adds the author of the Gospel of John in explanation, "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans". The Bible Jesus read included the Law, the Prophets, and some of the Writings. If the Samaritan woman knew about her Bible at all, she knew that it contained only the Pentateuch. In complete isolation from the main stream of development, the Samaritan Pentateuch was handed down from about 400 B.C. until to-day. The last surviving members of the Samaritan Sect now live in Nablus, the ancient city of Shechem in Palestine. There they show to visitors a thirteenth-century copy of

the Pentateuch descended from the book their ancestors took from Jerusalem when they were driven out twenty-three hundred years ago.

Wherever the Jews went they took their Bible. In Egypt the Jews of the Dispersion continued to listen to the Scriptures read in Hebrew long after they had ceased to understand that language. Finally as we know, between 280 and 150 B.C. the Septuagint Greek translation was available for use in the synagogues. Trivial though the legend of its translation is, there is nothing trivial about the Septuagint. It was the first extensive translation ever made of a national literature and it became one of the most influential books in the world. For Judaism the Septuagint became the strong bond uniting all Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion and transmitting to them the literary and religious heritage of their fathers. Through reading the Septuagint great numbers of Gentiles became converts to Judaism. They found in the Scriptures higher ideals and a better way of life than that taught by paganism and they learned to worship Israel's God. On his missionary journeys Paul found many Gentiles who already knew the Scriptures and were prepared for his Christian message. Finally, the Septuagint was the first Bible of the early Christian Church.

In the first century copies of the Septuagint were in great demand. Jews of Egypt numbering nearly a million, Greek-speaking Jews of the Dispersion living in colonies from Persia to Spain, Gentiles everywhere, and Christians—all of these read the Septuagint. No doubt the publishing houses of Alexandria found it difficult to supply the demand. Publishing was organised on a large scale in the houses of the rabbis in the Jewish quarter. Papyrus was bought in the Egyptian market where it had been sold for centuries. The chief scribe of the publishing house was usually a rabbi. He read slowly from an approved manuscript of the Septuagint while a battery of five to ten trained scribes seated at desks facing the reader wrote in concert. They used pens and ink and they wrote swiftly and accurately in a beautiful hand. After being carefully proofread the long strips of papyrus were rolled up, packed, and put aboard ships for export to the entire Greek-speaking world.

While the Septuagint flourished, its parent Hebrew Bible faced a crisis. In their homeland the Jews entered a life-and-death struggle threatening their church-state, their religion, and their Scriptures. In A.D. 67 the Jews of Palestine revolted against Rome. The Roman Emperor Nero sent Vespasian at the head of three legions to quell the uprising. Perhaps the words of a Galilean teacher put to death more than thirty years before troubled the citizens of Jerusalem: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another."

If Jerusalem fell, would the ancient religion of the Jews survive? It was a crisis similar to that of 586 B.C. when the Chaldeans destroyed Jerusalem. After that older calamity there had been a rebirth, and Judaism itself had emerged from the Exile. Now, with the Temple, the priesthood, and the sacrifices all at the mercy of the most powerful empire on earth, what would be the verdict?

At this crisis a teacher of Jerusalem, Johanan ben Zakkai, left the doomed city—some people said in a coffin—and had himself taken to Vespasian's military headquarters. There the wise and scholarly Jew asked a favour of the proud Roman general. The teacher wanted permission to establish a school for Jewish youths in the small town of Jamnia. To the Roman general the request for a school sounded harmless enough and he gave his consent. Thus Judaism was saved from complete destruction.

Vespasian was proclaimed Emperor shortly after this and returned to Rome, leaving his son Titus to capture and destroy Jerusalem. After bitter fighting and frightful massacres the Holy City was taken in A.D. 70 and burned, and the Tenth Legion encamped in the ruined Temple. Only thirty miles away in his school at Jamnia, Johanan ben Zakkai heard the news that the Temple was in ashes, the golden vessels stolen, and the Temple copy of the Bible on its way to Rome as the personal loot of Titus. As the author of the *Apocalypse of Baruch* wrote at this time: "Zion has been taken from us and we have nothing now save the Mighty One and His Law." But Johanan did not despair. He had brought copies of the sacred books to his school and there he was training young men in all the lore of the sacred Scriptures. When Jerusalem lay in ruins Jamnia took her place as a Jewish religious centre. Now there were teachers and scribes instead of priests. The sacrifices ceased but the Scriptures survived. Henceforth the Hebrew Bible became the "portable fatherland" of the Jews.

It was at Jamnia in the famous school of Johanan ben Zakkai that the council met about A.D. 90 to decide which books belonged to the canon. Pointing, no doubt, to the actual rolls brought from the Temple, the scribes and learned men of the council argued the merits of the various books. At length, they established the Hebrew canon in which the Writings were included, but the Apocrypha was left out. Having escaped a thousand dangers the Hebrew Scriptures now emerged to take their place at the very heart of Judaism.

PART II

THE NEW TESTAMENT

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA

Christianity Emerges

To all who stood watching on Golgotha beneath three crosses it seemed like the end. Between two thieves Jesus of Nazareth was dying upon a cross. It was a Friday afternoon in early spring, and here and there on the barren hillsides around Jerusalem there were patches of green. Since noon the sun had been clouded and in the strange darkness which covered the land Jesus' life was drawing to its close. The days of His teaching and healing were now over. No more of the gracious and wonderful words which had stirred men so profoundly would come from His lips. No longer would He travel along the dusty roads of Galilee and Judea with His little group of disciples. His mission, which some had hoped was to be that of the Messiah, was now ending.

Only a short time before, a glorious idea had stirred in Peter's mind. Trained as he was in the faith of Israel, Peter knew that God had spoken to his fathers in times past through the prophets. But as Peter and the others accompanied Jesus they had become aware of something even more wonderful. They saw the meaning and purpose of God breaking through into the world in the words and deeds of Jesus. "What manner of man is this?" they wondered. And then in a moment of inspired insight Peter cried out: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But now in the darkness of that Friday afternoon the disciples felt mocked by their once shining hope. Surely the Son of God would not be condemned by their religious leaders and crucified by the Romans. It was not possible that the fulfilment of the promises written in their ancient Scriptures was a man dying upon a cross. Sick with disappointment and the wreckage of a vision that now seemed false, Peter and the disciples fled. At the foot of the Cross there remained only the disciple Jesus loved and Mary the mother of Jesus.

As the end approached, a dark curtain seemed to fall. Jesus had left no written record of His life. Only in the hearts and minds of those who knew Him were there stored memories of His deeds and words. The lame who walked because of Him, the blind who could now see, the hungry who had been fed, the children who had been blessed, the possessed who were now sane men, the ordinary men and women who had found new hope in Him, the disciples who had seen a glorious vision—all these would perhaps remember Him a few years longer. But after that, what? At their best, human minds are frail storehouses. The record of all that Jesus did and said was stored in no other place. Would the record survive?

That seemed unlikely. The shock of His execution was enough to wipe out even these memories. There was so much shame and fear and blasted hope for them in Jesus' death that there was little chance the disciples would want to remember their brief years with Him.

After three hours of darkness there came a cry from the Cross: "It is finished," and as Jesus died the bystanders heard Him say: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Surely this was the end.

Heavy with sorrow, the disciple Jesus loved led Mary back to his house in Jerusalem. The priests and elders and scribes pointed to the dead figure on the central cross and said: "He can never stir up the people against us again." In the crow streaming back toward the city there was perhaps not one who understood the meaning of what he had just seen. At this supreme moment in human history the citizens of Jerusalem were intent upon returning to their shops and synagogues and homes. The priests and scribes went back to their scrolls of the Law and the Prophets, little realising that He who had died was the fulfilment of all the promises. They would continue to read of the Founder of the Kingdom, the Redeemer, the Restorer of Israel, the Light of the Gentiles, and the Judge of the World. And they would continue to sigh and wonder when this great Messiah would come.

Back in Jerusalem in Herod's Palace the Roman procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate, signed the official report of the execution and sent it by imperial courier to Emperor Tiberius in Rome. The whole affair was now practically ended and forgotten. There might be a few lines about it in the official histories of the period. The Roman historian Tacitus briefly mentioned "one Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius had been condemned to death by the procurator Pontius Pilate . . ." History has little space to devote to hopes that die and movements that fail.

For the space of one Sabbath day there was silence, sorrow, and despair. The world waited. Then very early in the morning on the "first day of the week" the dark curtain blinding men's eyes was drawn aside and they saw the radiance of the Resurrection. The events of that first day and the others that followed were told again and again.

With heavy hearts the women came to the rock-cut tomb where Jesus had been laid. They carried spices to prepare His body for burial. When they found the heavy stone guarding the tomb entrance had been rolled away, they looked in and saw that the tomb itself was empty. An angel spoke to them saying that Christ had risen from the dead. Mary Magdalene in the garden near the tomb saw and spoke to the living, risen Master. She ran and told Peter and John and they, looking in the empty tomb, saw and believed.

At first the stories that Jesus had risen from the dead were not believed. Some of the disciples regarded them as "idle tales", but for forty days the evidence of the Resurrection grew. The eleven disciples saw Him. Two men walking along the road towards Emmaus met Him and ate supper with Him. Doubting Thomas touched the spear wound in His side. Five hundred brethren at one time saw him. The chief priests and the Roman officials in an effort to discredit the news bribed the soldiers who had guarded the tomb and instructed them to say that the disciples had stolen the body. All this was to no avail. The testimony of the resurrection of Jesus was overwhelming. It has been called one of the best-authenticated facts in history. Without the Resurrection there would be no explanation for the change in the followers of Jesus. On the day of the Crucifixion they were terrified, sorrowful, despairing. Within a few weeks they had become men of unshakable courage. No longer did they meet in secret behind closed doors "for fear of the Jews". Joyfully they came out of hiding and proclaimed their faith in Christ crucified and risen again. They spoke to great crowds in Jerusalem and as time went on they preached their triumphant message "in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth".

The mission of Jesus did not end, as it seemed to on Golgotha, in suffering and shame. His words and deeds were not to be forgotten. After that "first day of the week" the disciples began to understand their Master. All their recollections of Him came flooding back, transformed in the light of the Resurrection. His words took on fresh meaning. His acts became charged with new significance. Out of full hearts and richly stored memories the Apostles preached and taught, imparting to crowds of people their new faith in the risen, victorious Christ. Individual men and women caught fire from the Apostles and the Holy

Spirit came upon them and they were made new. Thus the Church was born. And out of the life of the Church and in answer to her needs and her eager questions sprang those tremendous and immortal writings which we call the New Testament.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS

Forty Years of the Oral Gospel

In its simplest aspect the New Testament is a collection of twenty-seven documents written within the space of a hundred years. Four of these are gospels, one is a history, twenty-one are letters, and the last is an apocalypse. The oldest document is Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, written in Corinth about A.D. 50, twenty years after the Crucifixion. The oldest Gospel is that of Mark, written in Rome about A.D. 70, forty years or so after the events it records.

These facts immediately raise a problem. If our earliest Christian documents were written many years after Jesus lived, how can we be sure they contain authentic records about Him? Our problem is beset with other difficulties. Not only were the Gospels and Epistles written many years after Jesus lived, but none of them, so far as we know, was written by one of the original disciples. Paul never actually saw Jesus, though he had an overpowering vision of Him on the Damascus road. Mark may have seen Jesus, but if he did it was for little more than a brief moment in the darkness at Gethsemane. How, then, can we put our trust in the New Testament documents? These books have been called the "title-deeds of our faith". For this reason it is necessary for us to discover whether these title-deeds are valid documents or whether our faith rests upon a worthless collection of myths, speculations, and the fanciful dreams of men who never knew Christ.

Facing our problem squarely, we can see that the heart of it is this: What connexion is there between the actual facts of Jesus and the written record in the New Testament? How fully and how accurately were the memories of the men and women who had known Him reproduced in the New Testament documents? To-day we have stenographic reports, newsreel pictures, gramophone recordings, and newspaper accounts. Television and radio enable us to see and hear history in the making, but in the first century there were only human voices and human memories to carry the burden of historical fact. The records of Jesus were entrusted to the men and women who had known Him. How did they fulfil their trust? In the events of the years between the Crucifixion and the publication of the first Gospel there must be clues that will provide answers to these questions. We shall, then, search through the known facts of the forty years for evidence that our Gospel records are authentic and rest on solid facts.

If these forty years had been years of silence about Jesus, if all the Apostles and eyewitnesses had died without ever mentioning His name, there would surely have been no Christianity. Then all that we find written in the New Testament would be merely a dream created by a group of clever writers and sadly we would have to admit that the facts on which Christianity rests are not facts at all but a shimmering literary mirage. But those forty crucial years were not years of silence: they were years of the most enthusiastic witnessing and missionary activity the world has ever seen. They were years in which the Apostles and the hundreds of people who had seen and heard Jesus proclaimed their belief in Him and offered eyewitness testimony to buttress their faith. Something of the tremendous surge and power of early Christianity is reflected in the pages of Acts and the Epistles of Paul. By A.D. 70, there were Christians and Christian Churches not only in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, but in Egypt, Greece, Italy, and possibly in far-off Spain. All this implies a vast amount of preaching, teaching, and witnessing. The earliest followers of Jesus opened their storehouses of memories and broadcast the seed of Christianity so that it became a rapidly expanding movement taking root and flourishing in all parts of the ancient world. Its basic message rested on a fact, on genuine historical records supplied by those who had seen and heard. "The Word was made flesh, dwelt among us, and *we beheld his glory.*" So great a chorus and of living witness filled the early years that we can be sure Christianity is not a literary creation nor an idle dream.

In Acts the first voice we hear is that of Peter, Jesus' first disciple. All his fears and uncertainty have fallen from him like a worn-out garment and he stands up boldly in Jerusalem facing the very people who a few weeks before clamoured for Jesus' death. The city is alive with rumours. There is talk that Jesus is not dead. His disciples and followers seem possessed with a strange joy. Can it be that they are drunk? In the manner of the prophets Peter demands a hearing from the crowd.

> Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.
>
> Acts 2. 14

The murmur and mockery of hundreds of voices becomes stilled and in the hush Peter preaches his first sermon. He quickly disposes of the accusation of drunkenness. This radiance of spirit is not from wine but from the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Peter goes on to his main point.

> Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him . . . ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain . . .
>
> Acts 2. 22, 23

So far Peter is only stating facts everyone in Jerusalem knows. The crowd stirs at the term "wicked hands", but something in Peter's fearless manner keeps them silent, waiting for his climax. Peter hurries to the heart of his message.

> Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.
>
> Acts 2. 24

There it is: the first open proclamation of the Resurrection. In case they have not understood his first statement Peter repeats it: "This Jesus hath God raised up," he declares and stretching out his arm toward the eleven stalwart figures standing up beside him he adds, "whereof we all are witnesses."

Peter was on fire with a spiritual radiance which kindled the faith of "three thousand souls" who that day became believers. The Resurrection had convinced Peter that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. He felt compelled to share his new faith and the solid facts on which it rested with all who would listen. This was the first wave of an incoming tide which flooded the world with Christian witness. It was the beginning of a spiritual movement which in the space of a hundred years produced the New Testament.

Without doubt the first connected story the Church developed was the story of Christ's death and Resurrection. The spark that kindled Christianity was the Resurrection. That stupendous fact was its first good news. Everything grew out of it. From the teaching of the Resurrection came the message that conquered the world. It was the Gospel during the months following the Ascension, as Peter's three great speeches show.[1] It is the starting point of Paul's message: "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain" (I Corinthians 15. 14).

It is not surprising that when the Gospels were written, this one story, which is the record of a single week in Jesus' life, occupies at least a third of each of the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Churches began to spring up everywhere, for Apostles and teachers travelled far and wide with the new message. It would be interesting to know how many miles of travel were implied in the narratives of Acts alone; it must be many thousands. Almost everywhere the first Christian missionaries went they found a welcome. Hospitality became one of the characteristics of the new religion. Scores of eager converts crowded about those who had known Jesus and besieged them with questions.

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[1] Acts 2. 14–36; 3. 12–26; 4. 8–12.

"What did He teach about obeying the Law?"

"What did He say about money and taxes?"

"How did He answer the Pharisees?"

"Did He really cause the blind to see?"

"In our church we have this problem: What did He say about it?"

In answering such questions as these the Apostles and missionaries drew upon their store of remembered words and actions of their Lord. They recited His sayings and retold His stories. Earnest questions served to bring the Christian message into focus and to develop a series of answers. The Gospels were later to be built out of such materials. They were not spun out of pale theories, nor composed in an ivory tower of contemplation, nor written for artistic effect. Instead, they sprang vigorously to life in answer to the questions of people who needed help in living Christian lives in the actual world.

Some of the material now in our Gospels must have been originally selected and shaped for the purpose of training new leaders and outlining the message they were to preach. As early as A.D. 34 or 35, when Paul was led blinded into Damascus after his vision on the road, there was a definite body of facts for each new leader to learn. Paul indicates that his training in Damascus was definite and thorough, and that it rested mainly on the historical record.

> For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day.
>
> I CORINTHIANS 15. 3, 4

Not only the facts about Jesus' life but the words He had spoken were important in the early Church. In those days it was not unusual for the followers of a teacher or rabbi to commit his teachings to memory. No doubt the sayings of Jesus were stored in the memories of His Apostles and many of His other followers. Paul, in this quotation, seems to be referring to the custom of memorising the Lord's sayings:

> Ye ought . . . to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
>
> ACTS 20. 35

Memorising was certainly necessary in the years before there was a book in every church and in every home. The burden of transmitting to new converts the sayings and stories of the Lord fell upon the early Christian teacher. There was less for him to do after the Gospels were written, but up to A.D. 70, at least, he shaped and taught the Gospel materials word by word to his eager students.

We are often struck with the fact that the written Gospels seem to be built of short, disconnected bits. We find individual sayings, brief anecdotes, and parables. The Gospel authors skilfully grouped these short units and wove them together. Nevertheless, we can still see behind the Gospels a large stock of brief, miscellaneous materials. Were these the teaching units of the early Church? It is possible that teachers condensed the eyewitness accounts of Jesus and His sayings and parables into these easily memorised units. Small details were sometimes changed. In the interest of brevity the settings of time and place were often omitted, but the essential meaning of the incident was carefully guarded. The fact that the record was not embellished but compressed for easier memorising gives us renewed confidence in it.

Before the period of the oral Gospel ended many a Christian must have put his pen to use in the service of Christianity. How we wish we had even fragments of this first literary activity! Perhaps Christian writing began when some early teacher made a written collection of his teaching material. Some scholars now believe that the Apostle Matthew aided his memory by writing down Christ's sayings in Aramaic, the language in which they were spoken, and that part of this collection can be found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Were there early Christian hymnbooks, and did Luke borrow from them the four exquisite songs of his first chapter? In his preface Luke says that "many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are surely believed among us". Possibly there were primitive gospels written in Aramaic which gathered up the testimony concerning Jesus and provided sources for later Gospel authors. Perhaps a converted Jewish scribe made a collection of Old Testament prophecies for the use of teachers and writers who wanted scriptural authority for the person and message of Christ.

Finally, we leave speculation behind with the year A.D. 50 when Paul, then living with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth, pushed aside the materials out of which he was making tents and began to dictate our oldest New Testament document, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

THE OLDEST GOSPEL

The Gospel of Mark

In the month of July, A.D. 64, a fire broke out among the wooden buildings around the Circus Maximus in Rome. It raged for a week before finally burning itself out and leaving a large part of the city a mass of charred and smoking ruins. Rumour had it that the Emperor Nero set the fire so that he could rebuild the city to his own glory. People said that Nero played his fiddle as he watched Rome burn. Nero himself blamed the Christians. A group of them had been living in the city for almost twenty years, quietly going about their own affairs. Nero decided to make them the scapegoats for the disastrous fire and he had many of them executed at night in his gardens on the Janiculum. Peter and Paul are said to have died in these terrible massacres and, according to tradition, the place were Peter died is now the site of St. Peter's in Rome.

In the imperial city Christianity faced a desperate situation. With its great leaders dead and its members terrified of renewed persecution, the Church needed strengthening. Men and women no longer heard the triumphant message of Christ preached with Paul's deep conviction. They lacked the assurance Peter's very presence had given them that Christianity rested firmly on actual historical facts. It was in this crisis that the author of the first Gospel undertook his great service to Christianity. He decided to give the Christians in Rome a written account of their Lord to take the place of Peter's now silent voice.

Tradition names Mark as the author of this earliest of the Gospels and there is every reason to believe that in this case tradition is true. John Mark, to give him his full name, was not an outstanding figure in the early days; if he had been, we might question the tradition of his authorship of the earliest Gospel. Antiquity loved to attribute a book to the most important personage it could find. But John Mark played only a minor role in the opening acts of Christianity, being always associated with someone more prominent than himself: first Barnabas, then Paul, and later Peter. No one, however, in the early Church, except perhaps the Apostles themselves, was in a better position to know the facts than Mark.

He is mentioned nine times in the New Testament, and from

these references we can sketch the main outlines of his life. His mother Mary lived in Jerusalem and probably owned a large house there which became the meeting place, perhaps the headquarters, of Christ's followers after the Resurrection. It may have been in an upper room of this house that Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples. Mark's account of the arrangements for that meal is so detailed that it seems as though he were writing about an event that took place in his own house.

In the account of Jesus' arrest in the garden of Gethsemane there is a strange little incident that adds nothing to the story and apparently has no reason for being inserted in the midst of great events.

> And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men[1] laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked. And they led Jesus away to the high priest.
>
> Mark 14. 15–53

This seems to be the story of a young man who was perhaps awakened in the night by someone bringing a warning that Jesus was about to be seized. Such a warning might well have been brought to the house where Jesus had just eaten supper with His disciples, the house where John Mark probably lived. The young man evidently knew where Jesus had gone after the Last Supper, for without even pausing to dress he sped to Gethsemane, only to find that his warning was too late and that Jesus was already under arrest. Was this "certain young man" John Mark himself? Many people believe that it was and that Mark, writing years later, added this unessential fragment because it was his only personal connexion with the Gospel story.

Barnabas was Mark's cousin and in A.D. 47 the two men, together with Paul, sailed to Cyprus, on a missionary journey. Mark and Barnabas later returned to Cyprus on a second visit. Next we read of Mark in Asia Minor and in Rome with Paul. Paul speaks of Mark as "profitable to me for the ministry". Finally, Mark seems to have assisted Peter in Rome, for, in the tradition preserved in the First Epistle of Peter, Mark is described as "Marcus my son". Thus we have reliable evidence that for thirty-five years Mark laboured with the great Christian leaders, helping them carry the Gospel from Jerusalem to the Gentile world.

Our brief authority for Mark's authorship of the earliest Gospel is Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis about A.D. 140. Papias bases his statements about Mark on what a certain Church elder had told him. This chain of evidence takes us back to a time fairly close to the date of Mark. Papias writes:

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[1] Part of the armed mob that came to seize Jesus.

> The elder used to say the following: Mark, who became the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately as much as he remembered of the Lord's sayings or doings, but he did not write these in their order. For he had not himself heard the Lord nor been his personal follower, but was later, as I said, a follower of Peter, who used to adapt his teaching to the occasion but not as though he were framing an ordered account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark made no error when he wrote some things as he remembered them. For he had only one purpose:—to leave out nothing and to falsify none of the things he had heard.

This valuable fragment from Papias sheds light not only on Mark's authorship of the Gospel, but on Peter's manner of teaching and also on the way the Gospel materials developed. Peter was far from being a professor of history, and the Roman Christians were not taking a course in the life of Christ. Instead, they were men and women attempting to live Christian lives in the chief city of the Roman Empire. They needed facts about Jesus on which to base their faith. They needed His sayings to guide them in everyday problems. Peter was in the habit of responding to their needs "as the occasion required". Peter, as we know, had originally been a Galilean fisherman and his Greek could not have been very good. No doubt he spoke it with such an Aramaic accent that Mark had to interpret for him. When Peter died no one was better fitted than Mark to preserve in writing all that Peter had taught. Papias, quoting very early Church traditions, stated that Mark's book was accurate, complete, and without false statements. This is high praise, indeed, for any historical record.

Mark's readers often heard an echo of Peter speaking in the very form of the sentences. "They went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught." "When they were come from Bethany, he was hungry." "They came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith . . . " A good writer tries to keep his story focused on one character, but here we have a rapidly shifting point of view alternating between Jesus and the disciples. It is as inartistic as certain other clumsy sentences: "But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her." In any other writer such awkward sentences would be criticised, but we are glad to find them in Mark, for they bring us the very cadences of Peter's voice reminiscing about his years with Jesus and saying: "*We* went into Capernaum and straightway he entered into the synagogue." "When *we* came from Bethany he was hungry." "*We* came to Gethsemane and he said . . ." "But *my* wife's mother lay sick, and *we* told him of her." All these touches are, we believe, Peter's signature in Mark's Gospel.

The words of Jesus written in Mark are in sharp contrast to the fabric of the Gospel. They flash brightly. They are creative. They ring down the centuries like the trumpets of victory. Knowing all too well Mark's matter-of-fact style, we realise that he was incapable of inventing sentences like these. Their very quality is a guarantee of their source. They come not from Peter nor Mark but from Jesus Himself.

No greater pages have ever been written than Mark's story of the death of Jesus. In their simplicity and restraint they convey stark tragedy. Mark was too deeply moved by this event to utter elaborate lamentations. He did not let his pen run freely, lest in the welter of his own emotions he obscure the profound significance of the Cross. He dared write the dying words of Jesus:

> Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?
> My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
>
> MARK 15. 34

This was not the sort of thing anyone could possibly invent. One certainly does not expect to find it in a book which opens on the sublime note: "The gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." But Mark, writing it just as he heard it from Peter, here added the supreme note of tragedy to the story and gave final proof of the manhood of Jesus.

Mark's Gospel was copied, becoming the pattern for all the Gospels. From its opening words: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," came the word "gospel" which served as the title of the three other books which followed it and the non-canonical gospels as well. Matthew and Luke both took over Mark's Gospel and rewrote it for different audiences. John, also, used parts of it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

A GOSPEL FOR THE EARLY CHURCH

The Gospel of Matthew

After the fall of Jerusalem Titus had passed through Antioch on his triumphant way back to Rome, and there is good reason to suppose that here in Antioch, not long afterwards, the Gospel of Matthew was written by a leader of the Antioch church. His real name was lost long ago, but we shall call him Matthew, the name by which his book is known.

Like Antioch, this Gospel is Greek-speaking but it is, at the same time, the most Jewish of the Gospels. Matthew was doubtless a Jew by race, who wanted to show that the heritage of Israel now belonged to the Christian Church.

He was a literary architect and he worked according to a carefully thought-out plan. He wanted to issue a new edition of Mark's Gospel combined with the Sayings of the Lord. Of the 661 verses of Mark's Gospel 600 reappear in Matthew, but to Mark's simple framework of the deeds of Christ, Matthew added a wealth of sayings. The original document from which Matthew took these has disappeared. Matthew's skill lay in his arrangement of the miscellaneous sayings. He was not content with a hit-and-miss collection, but grouped the sayings in five sections according to subject matter, and interrupted Mark's narrative at five points to insert these sayings. The first and most famous group is in chapters 5, 6, and 7 and is called the Sermon on the Mount. Each of the five groups of sayings ends with the formula: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words."[1] The entire collection of sayings might easily have been spoken in a couple of hours, for of all that Jesus must have said, Matthew preserved only what the Church had found most effective.

The five collections of sayings divide the ministry of Jesus into five parts. In planning the Gospel this way Matthew may have had in mind the so-called five books of Moses or the Pentateuch.

Though the bulk of Matthew's Gospel is built from Mark and the Sayings of Jesus, there are about four hundred verses which cannot be traced to either of these sources. These verses include the ancestry of Jesus, the Wise Men's visit, the flight into Egypt, Peter walking on the water, Judas' death, Pilate's wife's dream, Pilate washing his hands, and the earthquake at the Crucifixion. No doubt Matthew took this varied material from oral teachings and from a written collection of Jerusalem tradition. Scattered through the Gospel are many references to Hebrew prophecy, introduced by the familiar refrains: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets . . ." or "For thus it is written . . ." In Matthew's day there may have been a collection of Scripture texts used by teachers to prove that Jesus was the Messiah foretold by the prophets. Either from this collection or from his own copy of the Scriptures, Matthew chose quotations to show how Christ's life fulfilled the prophecies.

When Matthew's Gospel was published sometime between A.D. 80 and 90, it immediately became popular. Teachers found that its clear arrangement helped their students and that the grouping of the Sayings made them easy to memorise. In one volume were now combined the contents of the two chief Christian documents of the day: Mark and the Sayings of Jesus. It enlarged Mark's portrait of Jesus as a man of action and showed Him as a teacher also. In the Sermon on the Mount people were given Christian standards of life. This statement of ethical ideals has never been surpassed, except in Matthew 25. 40 where ethical teaching reaches its climax in this: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

We would like to know who the man we have been calling "Matthew" really was. It is clear that he was not one of the twelve disciples, for in this Gospel there are none of the eyewitness stories and details that a disciple would surely have added. It is a book obviously copied from Mark and the Sayings. Would a disciple have depended on Mark's account? Surely not. Far from copying Mark, a disciple would have written an original narrative altogether. But our Matthew looked up to Mark as an authority. Furthermore, the Gospel was written fifty or sixty years after the events it describes, a long time for one of the original disciples to wait before writing down his memories.

How then did the name of St. Matthew, the disciple of Jesus, become attached to this Gospel? St. Matthew or Levi, as he is sometimes called, was the official whom Jesus saw "sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Papias, about A.D. 140, wrote: "Matthew composed the Sayings in the Hebrew language and everyone translated them as he could." Such a collection of

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[1] Matthew 7. 28; 11. 1; 13. 53; 19. 1; 26. 1.

Christ's very words made by one of the original disciples would have been highly valued in the early Church. We do not know whether Matthew's Sayings were in oral or written form, nor do we know who translated them into Greek, but it is probable that the author of the Gospel incorporated these Sayings into his book. It was natural for the name of Matthew to become attached to the Gospel in which the Sayings formed so important a part. The name serves to remind us that this account of Jesus probably rests upon the testimony of at least two disciples: Matthew, the tax collector, who first assembled the Sayings, and Peter, the fisherman, whose stories are preserved in Mark.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

LUKE'S TWO-VOLUME HISTORY

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

SPEAKING Greek and travelling over Roman roads and along the shipping routes of the Mediterranean, the early Christians soon carried their faith far and wide throughout the western world. The enormous vitality of Christianity was the main reason for its rapid diffusion, but there were other factors which aided it. Alexander's conquests of the fourth century B.C. brought Greek civilisation to his subject peoples and succeeded in breaking down the exclusive national groups of the earliest Old Testament days. Greek language, literature, and philosophy stormed the barriers separating peoples of different races, languages, and religions, and as the barriers were broken down, the world slowly became cosmopolitan. The various tribes or nations ceased to be of prime importance in this Greek-speaking, Greek-thinking world, and individual men assumed the centre of the stage. It was into such a world that Christianity came. It was a time when paganism was slowly dying of weariness and despair. Christianity blew through this world like a fresh wind of joy and triumph, proclaiming its faith in One who had said: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

In the market places of all the cities of the Roman Empire one encountered Christians eager to tell of their faith. Converts flocked in great numbers into the new churches which formed a mighty chain linking all the great centres of the Empire: Jerusalem, Antioch, Damascus, Ephesus, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Alexandria, and Rome. Christian missionaries often paused for rest at roadside inns on their ceaseless journeys. They travelled by ship and sometimes they went in chains as prisoners escorted by Roman soldiers. Frequently they were the defendants in trials before Roman magistrates. All too often an uproar in one of the cities grew from an act of violence against a Christian. Sometimes they were locked in prisons. There were escapes and rescues, persecutions and martyrdoms. Christianity did not grow and spread and permeate all classes of society without coming into conflict with the Jews and with the state. Even so, many a Jew was converted and many a Roman official wanted to know more about a religion which gave its believers an incredible courage and joy. The pagan faiths had no such power.

One of the Roman officials attracted by Christianity was Theophilus. Exactly who he was or where he lived we do not know. His position is not stated, but his title was "most excellent". To-day his great distinction lies not in his forgotten official position but in the fact that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were dedicated to him. His name appears in the third verse of Luke and the first verse of Acts and thus serves as a kind of pin fastening these two books together. Without Theophilus we might not have realised that these two works belong together and form a two-volume history of the rise and spread of Christianity. The first tells "all that Jesus began both to do and teach" and is a record similar to those in the first two Gospels. When the Church included Luke in the earliest four-volume collection of Gospels, it became detached from its companion volume of Acts. Acts carries forward the history begun in the Gospel of Luke and tells what Christ through the Holy Spirit continued to do and to teach in His Church. This second volume is really a history of early Christianity.

Theophilus and his friends were educated people who read the Greek and the Roman classics. They regretted the fact that Christianity did not speak to the educated world of their day through a well-written, authentic, historical account. Mark's Gospel was powerful but crude. It was a record. Matthew's was useful for church reading and instruction, but it was primarily a church book. The Greek-speaking world needed something different: something to appeal to a wide, reading public. It needed a book to show that Christianity was a religion of kindness, brotherhood, and joy rather than a conspiracy against the state. It was to meet these needs that Luke-Acts was written.

The author's name does not appear in either volume, but since the second century Church tradition has attributed these books to Luke. Like Mark, Luke was not one of the chief men of the Church, for he, too, was always associated with someone more important than himself. In Acts there are many repetitions of the pronoun "we". "We saw", "we arrived", and similar expressions are common. These "we-sections", as they are called, give us a clue to the author's identity. They occur frequently in the last part of Acts and they describe events in which Luke himself must have been present. He is mentioned by name three times in the New Testament: once as "the beloved physician", and again as Paul's "fellowlabourer".

The last reference is in the fragment of a letter written by Paul from Rome in which he says:

> Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. II TIMOTHY 4. 11

Luke was a physician, which implies that he was a well-educated man. We know that Paul suffered from some bodily ailment and quite likely Luke first became associated with the missionary movement as Paul's doctor. He seems to have travelled extensively with Paul, and in addition to being Paul's physician and probably his secretary as well, Luke would have helped Paul with travel arrangements and plans for meetings. "From the very first", as Luke said in his preface, he had an excellent opportunity to learn the facts upon which Christianity rested and to watch the development of the Church. He made the best possible use of his opportunities.

It was probably in Philippi that the idea first came to Luke of keeping a diary. He arrived in this Macedonian city with Paul, Silas, and Timothy about A.D. 49.

As a historian and a very careful observer, Luke realised the significance of the arrival of Christianity in Europe, and this may have given him the idea of keeping a record of all he saw and all that Paul did. Diaries were not unusual in Luke's day. Nearly a hundred years before, Caesar had kept a diary of his campaigns in Gaul. In all likelihood the story beginning with Acts 16. 9 is the opening of Luke's travel diary.

One could not travel ten or twelve years with Paul and avoid recording in one's diary a history of the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. But Luke's interest in preserving records did not end with his own travel diary. At Antioch he may have purchased a roll of the Sayings of Jesus based on the collection of the Apostle Matthew.

He also spent the years A.D. 56–58 in the seaport of Caesarea because Paul was imprisoned in the fortress there awaiting trial. As Luke was free to come and go, he doubtless spent part of his time collecting new documents and listening to oral traditions. Philip, the deacon, and his four prophetess daughters lived in Caesarea and from them Luke might have heard of the stirring years following the Crucifixion when Philip's fellow deacon, Stephen, was stoned and became the first Christian martyr. He may even have made a rough draft of his Gospel and Acts during these years in Caesarea. But if he did, the first draft must have been a sketchy document, for we know that Luke eventually inserted large portions of Mark in his own Gospel, and Mark had not yet been written.

Some scholars think Luke completed his history by A.D. 65, before Paul died, for Acts does not tell of Paul's martyrdom. However, as Luke may have had a good reason for omitting this, other scholars date Luke-Acts about A.D. 75, for the Gospel clearly mentions the fall of Jerusalem. Still other scholars date the Gospel about A.D. 90.

If it is true that a man's character expresses itself in his writing, we have abundant evidence of the sort of person Luke was. In the first place he was a literary artist, for his books are still charming to read and rank among the most beautiful writings of the Bible. An old legend says that Luke was an artist and that he painted a portrait of the Virgin Mary. There is symbolical truth in this story, for even if Luke was not an artist of brushes and pigments, he painted word pictures which have inspired artists in all ages. His stories of the Nativity and of the boy Jesus' visit to the Temple are unforgettable. He alone of all the evangelists gives the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Coin, the Prodigal Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus.

Acts, like the Gospel, contains a gallery of portraits of the men and women who launched Christianity. With all their varied traits and sharp individuality these people bear a striking family resemblance, for Luke shows them all bound together in the fellowship and power of the Holy Spirit. With great narrative skill, Luke writes of the clash of their personalities. Paul's figure dominates Acts and his controversies with the Jews are portrayed with dramatic power. In scene after scene, compressed sometimes to a few verses, he unfolds the heroic stature of the first Christians. The settings are varied. We are taken into temples and theatres, courts and prisons, homes and palaces. We live through one of the most thrilling accounts ever written of a storm at sea. The Gospel and Acts together form a continued story which moves swiftly, according to Luke's careful plan, from its opening scene in Jerusalem before the birth of John the Baptist, to its close with Paul in his own hired house in imperial Rome. Seldom has the march of history been so vividly or so powerfully recorded. Perhaps never has humanity been portrayed in such radiant colours.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

THE GOSPELS OF MARK, MATTHEW, AND LUKE VIEWED TOGETHER

To all who enjoy solving puzzles the New Testament offers a most fascinating one. This is the relationship of the first three Gospels and it is called the synoptic problem. In the three previous chapters we looked at Mark, Matthew, and Luke separately. In order to solve this puzzle we shall look at them together or synoptically. The word "synoptic" comes from *syn* meaning "together" and *optic* meaning "to view" or "to see". Viewing the first three Gospels together brings to light some extraordinary facts. All three are very often alike, agreeing sometimes word for word. That makes us think that somewhere there has been copying. Our problem is: who copied from whom? At other times the Gospels give different accounts of the same event, or one Gospel develops a story or group of sayings the others omit. Does all this shed any light on who wrote the Gospels and when and why?

Indeed it does. Much of what was said about the first three Gospels in preceding chapters is based on the answers scholars have found to the synoptic problem. It is a problem, however, that is not entirely solved. Our story of the origins, purposes, and authors of the Gospels must still be told with many a "possibly" and "perhaps" and it still offers scope for further study and fresh theories.

The best way to see the Gospels synoptically is to write their contents in three parallel columns, rearranging the material in such a way that similar accounts of the same incident appear on the same page. This laborious task has already been done by scholars who have prepared harmonies or synopses of the Gospels. These are printed to show at a glance the literary relationships of the Gospels. This is a typical example:

Matthew 19. 13–15	Mark 10. 13–16	Luke 18. 15–17
Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray; and the disciples rebuked them.	And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them.	And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.	But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God.	But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.
	Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.	Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.
And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.	And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.	

When we count the verses which are alike in the three books we find that the kinship of the first three Gospels is very extensive. Mark contains 661 verses in all. Of these Matthew repeats or reproduces the substance of 600. Luke uses only 350 of Mark's verses, but some of these are different from those Matthew gives. There are, in fact, only 31 verses of Mark which do not reappear in some form in Matthew and Luke. This begins to look as though Mark were the oldest Gospel and the one copied by both Matthew and Luke.

Our theory of the dependence of Matthew and Luke on Mark is strengthened by the order of events in the three books. Matthew usually arranged his copied material in the same order he found it in Mark. In a few cases where Matthew rearranged Mark's order Luke preserved it. When Luke followed his own sequence of events independently from Mark, Matthew usually gave Mark's order. Clearly, Matthew and Luke were not copying each other. They must both have derived much of their material and sequence from Mark. This solution of the synoptic problem shows us that Mark is the primary Gospel, the original record on which later documents were based. The Gospel of John also used Mark and even the *Gospel of Peter*, an heretical book not included in the canon, was based on Mark. Mark is the rock on which written testimony concerning Jesus is based.

This theory of the primacy of Mark is confirmed by the way Matthew and Luke change and adapt the material they copy from Mark. Neither of the two later writers was a slavish imitator. Naturally both Matthew and Luke had their own style of writing and each had a special purpose and a different audience. They wrote at a time when Jesus of Nazareth had become the object of Christian faith. They both wanted to portray Christ's divinity, and so they carefully toned down Mark's eye-witness details which convey so rich an impression of Christ's humanity. In Mark, Jesus is sometimes amazed or sorrowful, angered or grieved. In Matthew or Luke these details are usually left out.

In the scene where Jesus blesses the little children we note that Matthew omits Mark's: "when Jesus saw it he was much displeased," feeling perhaps that this picture of displeasure marred the portrait of Christ. Mark describes how Jesus "took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them". But Matthew leaves out the human gesture of taking the children in His arms and gives only the churchly gesture of blessing. "And he laid his hands on them." Luke, after the manner of Matthew, omits the picture of Jesus' displeasure and the act of taking the children in His arms.

This and many other similar examples support our theory that Mark was the first Gospel and very close to the eyewitness sources from which it was derived, while Matthew and Luke represent a later period and a more developed theology.

The synoptic problem has another fascinating angle. Mark is the shortest of the Gospels. Both Matthew and Luke have a great deal of material not taken from Mark. From what source or sources did they obtain this? Comparing this material in Matthew and Luke, we find that about two hundred verses of it are common to both Gospels. Again we propose a theory of copying to account for this large area of similarity. The two hundred verses consist mostly of the Sayings of Jesus. Surely there must have been either an oral or a written collection of the Sayings of so great a teacher as Jesus. Perhaps, according to the custom of those days, His disciples began to make this oral collection and commit it to memory while they still travelled with Him along the roads of Galilee and Judea. We do not know when the oral collection of Sayings was written down, but we remember that Papias said: "Matthew composed the Sayings in the Hebrew language and everyone translated them as he could." No doubt these Sayings of Jesus were one of the sources used by both Matthew and Luke and account for the similarity of the two hundred verses they have in common.

Modern scholars designate this common source of Matthew and Luke as Q from the German word *Quelle*, meaning "a source". The document itself has been lost, but ingenious attempts have been made to reconstruct Q. None is entirely successful. One is tempted to see the symbol Q as standing for "Question", for it is still a question whether the Sayings were oral or written, whether they were in Aramaic or Greek, whether the disciple Matthew or some other person collected them, whether Matthew and Luke used the same version of Q. It has been suggested that Q was well known in Rome and that Mark derived some of the Sayings in his Gospel from some version of Q. Possibly Mark wrote his Gospel to supplement these collected Sayings. Paul gives evidence of knowing some, at least, of the Sayings.[1] But the source Q still abounds in questions.

In a harmony of the Gospels we find many places where Matthew or Luke stands alone. The material for these passages each writer must have taken from his own special sources. Matthew had one source for his birth stories, while Luke seems to have had a different one. In the chapters on Matthew and Luke we saw where these two writers might have obtained their unique material.

Such is a brief account of the synoptic problem. The theories help us to understand how the three Gospels were written, but they leave us with scope for further study. Perhaps in the future better theories will be proposed. It is unlikely, however, that newer theories will be able to shake our well-grounded confidence in these three books. The more we study them, the better we see that these are trustworthy records of the Founder of Christianity.

So far we have said little about the Fourth Gospel. When we compare it with the others we see at once that the Gospel of John stands alone. On very few pages of the Gospel harmony is there a fourth column containing the text of John. John is usually printed in solid blocks by itself rather than in a column parallel to the others. Clearly it does not belong with the synoptic Gospels. It is like them in that it traces the life of Jesus, but it does this in its own original way. It is not a compilation nor a rewriting of the oral or written record, but a fresh creation by a great spiritual genius. The synoptic problem thus points to the uniqueness of the Gospel of John and leads us to ask Who wrote it and when and why and for whom?

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[1] I Cor. 7. 10; 9. 14.

CHAPTER THIRTY

CHRIST'S INTERPRETER TO THE GREEK WORLD

The Gospel and Epistles of John

In the entire Roman province of Asia no city was more important than Ephesus.

To-day Ephesus is a desolate ruin, its glory has long since vanished; but the greatest thing ever created there remains as a permanent possession of humanity. This is the Gospel of John.

Peter, Paul, and John are the three outstanding men of the early Church. Peter's courage and zeal helped to weld the first little band of Christ's followers into a Church. Paul crystallised the Christian message and carried it far beyond the limits of the Jewish world into the main stream of Graeco-Roman life. John plumbed the depths of spiritual understanding and gave the Church its profoundest interpretation of the life and message of Christ. Though time has erased all certain knowledge of who he was and where and when he lived, we still have his matchless Gospel and the three Epistles attributed to him and from these we can gain some idea of John. It is thought that he was a church leader in Ephesus, but even this is not a proved fact. Uncertainty surrounds John on every side, and we have to build his story on a foundation of probability, theory, and legend.

At first this appears to undermine our confidence in the book itself. If it cannot claim apostolic authorship, by what authority does it speak to us? But then we remember that the other Gospels were not written by Apostles, either. This Gospel, like them, was tested in the crucible of early Christianity. Amid cries of heresy and the flames of persecution the Gospel of John won a place for itself and was accepted by the Church. Centuries of Christian experience endorse it. It is an inexhaustibly deep well of spiritual refreshment and from it men have always drunk the "living water" which Christ promised them. Who then dug this well?

We can never be entirely sure. The author was careless of his own literary immortality in his profound concentration on the Person of Christ.

John's mind and heart were centred in his Lord. These many years he had known Him through his own deep experience. John believed that the power and abundant life he had found in knowing Christ was available to all men. He wrote his Gospel with the purpose:

> That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.
>
> JOHN 20. 31

John's purpose was to help recreate the Christian experience in the hearts of his readers. They had Mark's factual record; John gave them an interpretation of that record. He painted a portrait of Christ. Out of the thirty years of Jesus' human life John chose the events of only twenty days or so and he devoted his entire Gospel to these. He began with a phrase that echoed the opening of Genesis and he showed Christ before the creation of the world. This eternal and heavenly picture of the Lord was the shining reality behind all that followed. John developed his story by telling such events as the water changed into wine, the secret visit to Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the feeding of the five thousand—not merely to record the facts, but to help men to understand Christ. He knew how easy it was for men to miss the full significance packed into Mark's matter-of-fact account and so he expanded the bare records of word and deed, weaving into them the colourful strands of dialogue and comment. John respected the facts, and it is even thought that at several points his Gospel corrected the Synoptic record and preserved a more reliable tradition. John started with facts, but his goal was faith. To John, the Jesus of history was the Christ of his faith. These formed the warp and woof of the rich fabric of his Gospel.

Again and again John used the great words of his Epistles and sermons as radiant points in his Gospel. He wrote of: love, light, life, truth, knowledge, belief. Out of the quarry of the Greek language he created new phrases, "the light that lighteth every man", "the Father's house", "eternal life". As a poet, philosopher, and theologian John endowed these words and phrases with deeper meanings so that they might convey his faith. He carved those superb portraits of Christ by which we know Him to-day. He was the Word of God, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd.

John's Gospel rises to a tremendous climax in chapters 14–17. These are the great discourses where we can almost hear Christ speaking to us and where we feel ourselves included in His prayer.

> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.
>
> JOHN 17. 20

Here are perhaps the best-loved chapters of the Bible, and in all literature there are no greater devotional pages than these.

The very heart of this Gospel, and indeed of the Bible itself, is in the third chapter where John wrote his most inspired sentence:

> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
>
> JOHN 3. 16

Which Gospel would we choose if we could keep only one? That difficult choice would surely depend upon circumstances. If one lived with people who questioned the historical reality of Jesus one might well keep Mark. A teacher or missionary would need Matthew. A literary man would choose Luke. But if we were condemned to live alone on a desert island, would we not take John?

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

PAUL'S LEGACY TO CHRISTIANITY

THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

THE Four Gospels stand first in our New Testament, not because they were written first, but because they concern the first and central fact of Christianity, namely Jesus Christ. It is appropriate that the fourfold story of His life precedes everything else, though in point of time the Gospels are not the oldest Christian literature. When Mark began to write his Gospel in Rome about A.D. 65, there were already ten New Testament documents in existence, which neither Mark nor anyone else at that time considered Scripture. They form nearly one quarter of the New Testament and, as they were all written between A.D. 50 and 65, they are therefore our oldest Christian documents.

They are letters written by the greatest Christian of the first century, Paul of Tarsus. Though born in a Greek city, Paul was a Jew with Roman citizenship, but race, language, and citizenship do not completely explain Paul. To understand him we must travel with him down the road toward Damascus about three years after the Crucifixion. Paul, or Saul as he was then called, is a fiery young Jew zealous to stamp out what seems to him to be an alarming heresy claiming that Jesus who was crucified is the Messiah. It is midday. A brilliant "light out of heaven" appears and a voice speaks. The whole company of horsemen with whom Saul is journeying dismount and throw themselves on the ground, but only Saul sees Christ in glory and understands His Voice.

> Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? . . .
> Who art thou, Lord? . . .
> I am Jesus whom thou persecutest . . .
> Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? . . .
> Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee
> what thou must do.
>
> ACTS 9. 4–6

This vision on the road was the central event of Paul's life. From this moment until his martyrdom in Rome nearly thirty years later, Paul was possessed by Christ. As zealously as he had persecuted, he now spread the new Faith. His special field was the Gentile world and many of the Greek-speaking cities

of the Roman Empire heard his voice and rapturously embraced faith in Christ.

In A.D. 50 Paul arrived in Corinth, where he was to write the first of that great series of Epistles which projected his message far beyond his own century and which form his chief legacy to Christianity.

At this time Paul was living in the house of Aquila and his wife Priscilla. During the day they employed him as a weaver in their tentmaking shop, but in the evening they and their friends sat around him listening spellbound as he retold his experience of Christ. Silas, Paul's able helper, had recently joined him and now both missionaries eagerly awaited the arrival of their companion Timothy who had remained behind in Thessalonica to strengthen the new church there.

One day a man stood in the doorway of Aquila's shop and looking up Paul saw that Timothy had come. The smile on his face told Paul that the news from Thessalonica was not as bad as he feared it might be. In spite of the riots which Paul's presence in that city had caused, and in spite of Paul's forced and hurried withdrawal, the little church was carrying on. Nevertheless there were difficulties and as Timothy recounted these Paul's brow wrinkled. The Thessalonians clearly needed help, but Paul could not go to them. What was to be done?

Perhaps Paul did now what he always did under such circumstances: he wrote a letter to the Thessalonians. It would not be surprising if Paul had written many letters before this one, for letter writing was very common at this time, but if earlier letters once existed they have now perished and his First Epistle to the Thessalonians is our oldest surviving Christian letter, as well as the oldest New Testament document.

He must have dictated it in the evening after he put aside his weaver's shuttle and the clatter of the looms was stilled. Outside in the two harbours of Corinth sails were furled and ships rode silently at anchor. The last rays of the sun faded from the heights of Acro-Corinth, the gigantic peak rising above the city. People passing in the dark streets must have seen a candle shining from Aquila and Priscilla's shop and exclaimed, "What are those Christians doing?" Inside, the entire little Christian company watched as a professional letter-writer spread his papyrus on a table under the candlelight. He arranged his bottle of ink and his reed pens. The first New Testament document was about to be written. All was in readiness for Paul's opening words. They were a salutation in the usual Greek form which with admirable directness first announced the sender's name:

> Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> I THESSALONIANS I. I

Paul had given much thought to this letter and had possibly already made notes to guide him in dictating, for this Epistle would carry his message on several disputed points. The letter-writer was skilled and wrote swiftly the words that came tumbling from Paul's lips. Here and there Silas and Timothy interrupted with a suggestion. When the letter was done the scribe handed it to Paul for approval. In the space left at the bottom of the sheet Paul wrote in his own hand the last four verses of personal message and blessing. These verses took the place of a signature and were a guarantee of the letter's genuineness.

Folded, tied with a cord, and sealed with wax, the letter was now ready to be sent. The next morning Timothy entrusted Paul's letter to the captain of a vessel about to set sail, and the first New Testament Epistle was soon on its way over the Aegean Sea to its destination in Thessalonica, the Macedonian city named for the sister of Alexander the Great and to-day the Greek port of Salonika.

The entire Thessalonian church assembled to watch their leader break the seal and unfold Paul's letter. They must have listened with deep attention as the letter was read aloud, for every word in it applied to them. Unlike us, they did not puzzle over what Paul really meant by this and that. His meaning was perfectly clear to them, for the letter answered their uncertainties and commented on their difficulties. At the end they read a set of practical exhortations that went far beyond their own immediate problems and gave them standards to guide them in their church life. Here was a document to be kept and read again and again to the assembled church. Accordingly, they placed it in their church chest with the sacred vessels and their volume of the Septuagint. It was reread and copied perhaps, but for forty years it remained merely a letter written on a few sheets of papyrus in the handwriting of a professional letter-writer of Corinth.

Paul wrote many other letters, and the New Testament contains a superb collection of epistles to other churches. From Corinth Paul made his way back to Jerusalem, stopping at Antioch. There, no doubt, he heard distressing news that caused him to write his Epistle to the Galatians. Before his journey into Macedonia and Greece, Paul and Barnabas had founded churches in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and

Derbe and had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles". During Paul's absence these churches in the Roman province of Galatia had been visited by teachers who saw Christianity as a sect of Judaism. They taught that Christianity must be entered through the gateway of Jewish Law and ritual. They thought that a Gentile must first be circumcised before he could become a Christian. Paul saw this for what it was, a dangerous challenge to his own teaching. Faith or the Law: this was the issue at stake. For Paul there could be no question about it. Since his tremendous experience on the Damascus road, his whole being was possessed by his faith in Christ which had made him free of the Law. This Faith he had preached to the Galatians. Now he wrote them one of his greatest Epistles, which explains his doctrine of the freedom of religion. He vindicated his own right to be called an Apostle and showed the difference between Faith and the Law. He clearly set forth the responsibilities of this Faith and described the fruits of the Spirit. Surely none of the narrow Judaisers could have matched the spiritual vitality and depth of Paul's teaching in this Epistle to the Galatians.

Paul spent three fruitful years in Ephesus with his friends Priscilla and Aquila, who were now settled here, and he founded a church which became one of the chief centres of Christianity in Asia. While in Ephesus news was brought to him by "Chloe's people" that all was not well in Corinth and that differences of opinion divided the church there. People had even begun to doubt Paul's authority and to prefer other leaders. Questions had arisen about such matters as lawsuits, the relationship of men and women, eating meat sacrificed to idols, women's behaviour and dress in church, ecstatic speaking, and the Resurrection. As was his custom, Paul dealt with all these problems in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. If he had done only this, his reply to the Corinthians would have little value for us, but it is far more than this. He related these local problems to fundamental Christian principles and wrote one of the most valuable documents the Church possesses. It contains our oldest account of the Last Supper (I Corinthians 11. 23–6), and of the Resurrection (I Corinthians 15. 3–9), both written at least ten years earlier than Mark's account. Its best-known chapters are the thirteenth, with its superb poem on love, and the fifteenth, which ends with the majestic verses on immortality. It was passages like these which led Erasmus to exclaim: "Paul thunders and lightens and speaks sheer flame." This magnificent Epistle closes with brief personal messages and Paul's own autograph greeting.

> The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand.
>
> I CORINTHIANS 16. 21

We know that Paul wrote at least four letters to the Corinthian church. Scholars believe that in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians are imbedded fragments of two short letters. The first fragment is II Corinthians 6. 14 to 7. 1 and is a warning against associating with immoral people. It contains the great sentence: "Ye are the temple of the living God." The second fragment, chapters 10 to 13, is Paul's self-defence against his enemies in Corinth. It is really a brief autobiography and contains an almost incredible catalogue of Paul's dangers and sufferings, which, as we know from Acts, were far from over at this time.

The main part of II Corinthians, chapters 1 to 9, was probably the fourth letter written to that church and it was most likely written from Macedonia when Paul was planning to return to Corinth. The controversy that called forth the famous self-defence in the third letter is now happily ended and Paul is filled with thanksgiving. In this mood he opens his heart to the Corinthians and gives them, in chapters 2. 12 to 6. 10, an account of how and why he is preaching the Christian faith. He was an ambassador of Christ who had come to him in the blinding experience on the Damascus road. Paul had become a new person and he preached that all men might enter into this transforming experience.

> Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.
>
> II CORINTHIANS 5. 17, 18

Reaching Corinth shortly after his fourth letter was delivered, Paul looked out from her western harbour toward the Adriatic Sea and Italy. He planned now to carry his message to Rome and Gaul and distant Spain. Before he could do this, however, he felt impelled to take the gifts of money contributed by his Gentile churches for the poor of the Mother Church and bring them to Jerusalem. After that he would go to Rome. In order to prepare for his arrival in the imperial city and to acquaint the Christians there with his doctrines, Paul at this time wrote to the Roman church his greatest Epistle. It was written in Corinth, about A.D. 55, and contains the heart of Paul's message compressed into a letter.

Righteousness is the theme of Romans. In the first two chapters Paul shows how both Gentiles and Jews "have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". The third chapter states that the only remedy for sin is faith in Christ. Paul explains in chapter 4 how Abraham was justified by faith. In the next four chapters Paul describes the Christian life ending in the well-known eighth chapter with the triumphant assertion:

> Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
>
> ROMANS 8. 37-39

Chapters 9, 10, and 11 contain his explanation of God's dealings with Israel, for Paul never forgot that he was a Jew. Next, he sketches a practical and helpful picture of how Christian people should behave. This section, 12. 1 to 15. 13, is like a Sermon on the Mount written for the Greek-speaking church. Paul ends with personal news and his hope:

> That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God.
>
> ROMANS 15. 31, 32

From Acts we know what actually happened: the riot and arrest in Jerusalem, the long imprisonment in Caesarea, the shipwreck, and finally Paul's arrival in Rome in chains.

Paul's last three letters, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were all written from prison. According to one theory Paul may have sent these Epistles from Ephesus during a period of imprisonment there. If this is true, they add three new titles to the list of Christian documents produced in Ephesus. Perhaps we shall never know whether to place these three letters in Ephesus or in Rome, from which tradition says they were written. The letter to the Philippians is a letter of thanks for aid they had sent Paul by their messenger, Epaphroditus. In his customary manner Paul transforms a letter on an ordinary subject into a supremely important Christian document and in a memorable sentence explains the secret of his heroic life: "For to me to live is Christ."

Colossians and Philemon were written at the same time and entrusted to two men travelling together. Tychicus carried the Epistle to the Colossians which deals with a new heresy and touches on the idea of Christ as the Logos or Word of God, an idea John was later to develop in his Gospel.

With Tychicus travelled a young slave named Onesimus who had robbed his master and run away from him. Though runaway slaves were usually crucified, Onesimus was now courageously returning to his master Philemon with a letter for him from Paul. Travelling in the company of Tychicus, Onesimus must have felt some misgivings as he wondered how Philemon would receive him. Philemon was a Christian, probably of Laodicea, and the Church there seems to have met in his house. As the runaway slave had now become a Christian also, Paul believed this created a new relationship between master and slave and made it safe for Onesimus to return to Philemon bearing Paul's letter. Did Christianity effect any change in the conditions of slavery, that hideous blot on antiquity? Did Philemon receive Onesimus back with Christian kindness? We do not know the actual outcome of this story, but the fact that this letter survived at all is sufficient proof that Onesimus was forgiven and that Christianity little by little improved the relations between masters and slaves.

We wish we might read the complete file of Paul's correspondence, together with all the letters to which his Epistles were the answers. There is much in his letters that is timeless and his deepest religious insights shine like jewels with little need of their ancient settings. But there are some things in his letters that are not clear to us. Even the writer of II Peter shared our difficulty:

> Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood.
>
> II PETER 3. 15, 16

It has been said that these letters take the roofs off the early Christian churches and let us look inside. We see that serious and often bitter problems endangered the first-century Church, for Paul often fought heresy, schism, and lapses into paganism. The evils accompanying a pagan civilisation were not conquered in one round. If we are prone to put haloes on the early Christians, these letters remove them. Paul's lists of the sins and failures of his converts are quite appalling. But turning from the dark side to the bright one, we find in his letters a wonderful picture gallery of early Christians. As we read his letters we gain a sense that Paul is describing something the world had never seen before. Here is a new society emerging, a spiritual fellowship ruled by love. Christ is the fountainhead of this new brotherhood which is indeed the "household of God". Paul's courtesy, his concern for each one of the brethren, his joy in

their faith, his gratitude for their care of him—all this is the expression of the new fellowship in Christ. For all his mysticism Paul was a practical man, and one may assemble from his Epistles a valuable collection of rules to govern the lives and relationships of Christian people. Here is a source of much that is attractive in Christian civilisation and characteristic of Christianity at its best.

In these letters Paul himself steps down from our stained-glass windows and we see him more human than any imaginary painting can make him and at the same time, greater in stature than the most august idealisation. His letters are full of autobiography. Even without Acts we might re-create his life and personality from these letters. We are amazed that Paul so often found it necessary to defend his right to be an Apostle and that his many opponents forced him again and again to present, as it were, his credentials. These were nothing less than his experience of Christ. Over and over again he tried to explain this experience which in its depth and breadth and intensity was incapable of being put into adequate words. But Paul's swift mind, his ready tongue, and his intense longing to communicate his Faith brought great areas of his experience within the comprehension of the men and women of his time and of all times. He spoke indeed with the tongues of men and of angels. His true epitaph is written in the words:

> I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.
>
> II TIMOTHY 4. 7

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

DEFENDING THE FAITH

HEBREWS, I PETER, JAMES, JUDE, II PETER

IT was once thought that these five Epistles were written by Apostles: Hebrews, by Paul; I and II Peter, by the Galilean fisherman named Peter whom Jesus called the "Rock"; James, by the Lord's brother who became one of the leaders of the Jerusalem church; and Jude, by another brother of the Lord and of James. If these theories of authorship were correct the five Epistles would reflect the years before A.D. 65, for tradition tells us that James was murdered by the mob in Jerusalem in A.D. 62, and Peter and Paul died in Rome during Nero's persecutions in A.D. 64 and 65. We find, however, that the background of these Epistles is not the earliest years of Christianity but a period when the Apostles were dead and a new generation of Christians faced apathy from within, persecution from without, heresy, and schism. It is against the background of the years from A.D. 80 to 150 that these Epistles were probably written. They show Christianity defending the endangered areas of faith. After we discard the traditional theories of their authorship we find that these documents have lost little of their value, for their authority comes, not from the identity of their authors, but from the quality of the writings themselves.

Whoever their authors were, Hebrews and I Peter are among the finest things in the New Testament. In searching for the real author of Hebrews, scholars have suggested such people as Apollos, Luke, Barnabas, Philip the Evangelist, and Priscilla the wife of Aquila. Though we may never be able to name the unknown writer of Hebrews, we know his style to be the most polished and literary in the New Testament. His language is brilliant and forceful and he follows a carefully thought-out plan. In the eleventh chapter, with its catalogue of the heroes of the Faith, he rises to a magnificently eloquent climax. But the author of Hebrews was more than an accomplished writer: he was a spiritual statesman as well. He saw Christians becoming lukewarm toward their glorious heritage. He also knew that they wondered about the true relation of Christianity to Judaism. Indifferent and puzzled Christians were no match for Roman persecution, which was becoming a serious threat under Domitian. Christians could be put to death for refusing to burn

the little piece of incense to the emperor. Foreseeing renewed persecution, the unknown author wrote Hebrews to help the Church meet this danger. It was a book designed to rekindle Christian faith wherever it burned low.

Perhaps Hebrews was originally not a letter at all but a sermon. Though it ends like a letter, it reads like a speech. There is no salutation in the beginning, but it opens with a bold announcement of its theme:

> God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.
>
> HEBREWS 1. 1, 2

We are at once reminded of the opening of John's Gospel and of Paul's doctrine in Colossians. The author of Hebrews goes on to explain Christ's nature and mission. He compares Judaism and Christianity and brings out the supreme value of the latter. His picture of Jesus as the high priest whose sacrifice and faith showed us the reality of the invisible world was a picture especially attractive to those familiar with Judaism and the Scriptures. They must have listened with pleasure to the many quotations from Deuteronomy, Psalms, Proverbs, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk. The unfolding argument paused now and again for practical exhortations, but even with this relief the sermon was an exacting one to follow and it demanded a high degree of intelligence from its audience. If any grew weary during the ninth and tenth chapters, their attention was captured by the eloquent chapter beginning:

> Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
>
> HEBREWS 11. 1

As the congregation heard the preacher set forth the glittering array of heroes of the Faith, there was rekindled in their hearts an answering faith strong enough to withstand persecution.

> Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.
>
> HEBREWS 12. 1, 2

Like Hebrews, I Peter is written against the background of the "fiery trial", which was probably the persecution under Domitian. If this is so, the Epistle must be dated about A.D. 95, too late to come from the pen of Simon Peter. Its unknown writer belongs, nevertheless, to the true company of believers. His book is one of the most beautiful in the New Testament and its message of patience, forgiveness, and hope breathes the spirit of pure Christianity. The Epistle opens with a salutation and closes with the customary personal messages, but these were probably written by a later editor. There is a theory that the editor had in his possession two valuable documents, a sermon and a letter, both by an outstanding Church leader.[1] In order to make these available to a wider audience he published them together in the form of an Epistle. This was easily done and the true author's name having been lost, the Epistle was circulated under the name of Peter.

The sermon apparently opens with: "Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and closes with a doxology and amen in I Peter 4. 11. It is the sort of address a church leader might have made to a group of newly baptised adults. He gave them a picture of the new life they had just entered and exhorted them to live worthy of it, not only in all the relationships of their lives, but even through suffering and persecution. His directions for living the Christian life are inspiring at any time, but they become even more moving to us when we picture those for whom they were first written. These were newly converted Christians, brought up in paganism and now facing the hostility of a world that worshipped a divine emperor.

The pastoral letter opens abruptly in I Peter 4. 12 with: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," and ends with a doxology and amen in 5. 11. It seems to be addressed to several churches and to their leaders or elders.

James, like Hebrews and most of I Peter, is a sermon later published in letter form and circulated among Christians everywhere. Its author is unknown, but he probably delivered this sermon about A.D. 100 to a congregation who needed definite instructions in moral living. He exhorts men to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only". Though this Epistle adds little to our understanding of Christianity, it is full of practical advice and occupies an honoured place in the library of Christian ethical literature.

Jude was probably written by the Bishop of Jerusalem in the reign of Trajan, about A.D. 125. It is a vigorous denunciation of the heresy of a group of Christians who considered themselves so spiritual that they did not need to obey the ordinary rules of decent behaviour. They thought that anything they chose to do would be right and that the usual moral laws did not apply to them. As a result of this they indulged in all kinds of sensuality until they became a scandal in the Church. Jude lashed out against these "ungodly men", calling them clouds without rain, trees without fruit, raging waves, and darkened stars. He wrote to exhort men "that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints". This phrase carries overtones of a Christianity that was now old and well established, but that still needed to be defended. Jude ended his Epistle with a doxology that is as beautiful as any in the New Testament.

II Peter cannot be by the same author as I Peter, nor is it by the Apostle Peter. Its date is probably A.D. 150 and this makes it the last New Testament document. II Peter exhorts men to stand fast in the faith, to avoid false teachers, and to continue in the hope of Christ's return. For us its chief value is the light it throws on second-century Christian history. Its author read many of the Christian books popular in his day. Among these was the Epistle of Jude which the author of II Peter liked so much that he incorporated a large part of it in his own document. He knew the tradition that Peter is the authority behind Mark's Gospel. He had read I Peter, for he states that his is the "second epistle". He also gives evidence of knowing the four Gospels and the collected Epistles of Paul, some of which puzzled him. When he mentions Paul's Epistles in the same breath with "the other scriptures", he gives us a clue to the emergence of the New Testament. By A.D. 150 a new idea was appearing that there should be a New Testament to stand on an equal footing with the ancient Scriptures we now call the Old Testament. Before long, as we shall see, twenty-seven Christian documents written between A.D. 50 and 150 were to be collected, canonised, and published as the New Testament.

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[1] B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church*, (Macmillan, 1929), pp. 121 ff.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

CHRISTIANITY TRIUMPHANT

THE REVELATION OF JOHN

FIFTY miles offshore from Miletus in Asia Minor lies the rocky island of Patmos. Here, about A.D. 96, came a Roman galley with a boatload of prisoners. Roman guards herded them ashore and turned them over as slave labour to the quarry foreman on Patmos. These people were, for the most part, Christians from Asia Minor who had refused to worship the Emperor Domitian as a god and had therefore been condemned to exile on Patmos. It is thought that among the exiles was a man named John. This John was a sensitive type of person, imaginative, poetic, a dreamer of dreams, one who often saw visions. He was well educated and, even though he had not been able to bring his books with him into exile, his mind was a storehouse of scripture, Jewish apocalypses, and Christian literature. The strongest fibre in John's being was his Christian conviction for which he had been willing to suffer persecution. Rather than compromise with Emperor worship, he had preferred banishment to hard labour in the quarries of Patmos. There, straining his eyes eastward toward the mountainous coast of Asia Minor, he wondered how his brothers in Christ fared. Were they strong enough to withstand tribulation? Now that the outlook seemed hopeless, were they deserting their Faith for the safety of the official religion of the Empire?

Then a strange thing happened to John and he tells about the beginning of it in these words:

> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia.
>
> REVELATION I. 10, 11

The visions John saw were not of this world. Some were beautiful and some were horrible. He saw the throne of God, angels with trumpets, the Son of Man with eyes as a flame of fire, grotesque beasts, a woman clothed with the sun, and four extraordinary horsemen. There were earthquakes, thunder, loud trumpeting, and song. The actions that took place in John's visions were like the events in a dream. All these sights

and sounds held profound meaning, for they proved to him the reality of his Faith and justified his belief that Christianity would soon triumph. When the harshness of his exile was over and he could obtain writing materials, John wrote the substance of his visions in a book which we now call the Revelation of John.

Its purpose was to inspire hope, courage, and endurance among persecuted Christians. Hebrews and I Peter had been written with a similar purpose, but Revelation was an entirely different type of book from these. It is an apocalypse filled with strange visions of things to come. Throughout the New Testament we come upon brief apocalyptic passages which show the popularity of this form of literature in the first century. The Jews at this time also had their apocalypses, some of which may have influenced the author of Revelation. This is the only New Testament apocalypse, as Daniel is the only Old Testament apocalypse.

The opening chapter of Revelation introduces the author:

> I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.
>
> REVELATION I. 9

It announces that the theme of the book concerns "things which must shortly come to pass". Next John writes on Christ's behalf seven letters to the seven Churches of Asia Minor whose names make haunting music: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea. No doubt Paul's collected Epistles gave John his idea for using the letter form. In the letter to Laodicea, the probable church of Philemon and Onesimus, John wrote his beautiful description of Christ knocking on the door:

> Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
>
> REVELATION 3. 20

After the letters comes the main action of John's vision which unfolds in three stupendous acts. The first act, in chapters 4 to 11, is laid in heaven where a book of fate sealed with seven seals is finally opened. Though we cannot understand exactly what is happening or what it means, we are shown the throne of God, twenty-four elders clothed in white, seven lamps, four beasts, angels, the Lamb who, as so often in a dream, turns into something else and becomes the Conqueror on a white horse. He also saw that:

> . . . a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.
>
> REVELATION 7. 9

We learn who these people are and the blessedness to which they have attained.

> These are they which came out of great tribulation . . . They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.
>
> REVELATION 7. 14, 16, 17

In the second vision there is war in heaven between a great red dragon and Michael and his angels. The eighteenth chapter announces that "Babylon the great is fallen" and as we read this passage we realise that it is John's dream of the fall of hated Rome.

In the last four chapters triumph and rejoicings are heaped one upon another in the vision of the New Jerusalem. The heavens open and a white horse appears whose rider can be no other than Christ. He is not like the Christ of the Gospels but a Divine Being whose name is "The Word of God". With his sharp sword He smites the nations and rules them with a rod of iron. John saw "a new heaven and a new earth" and "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven". He heard a great voice proclaiming the goal of human striving. Here is the culmination of all the prophets' longings and the Church's prayers.

> Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.
>
> REVELATION 21. 3, 4.

This holy Jerusalem was a city with twelve foundations and twelve gates, and a high wall, all shining in a many-coloured blaze of jewelled splendour.

> And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.
>
> REVELATION 21. 23, 24

The Bible opened in a garden, but it ends in the Holy City, the new Jerusalem. There were two people in the garden, but here there are multitudes of God's people from all nations. Instead of the river that flowed out of Eden, John saw a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb". And the tree that grows here in paradise is one whose leaves are "for the healing of the nations".

This book of visions and symbols, of unearthly music, and unconquerable hope must have stirred the people for whom it was first written. Where we grope for its meanings, they understood clearly what John was trying to tell them. He was dealing with their tribulations and persecutions, their bitter conflict with Rome. The very stuff of his vision came from the books they read and the apocalypses which were so popular among them. John knew how dark the present was with suffering, fear, and hopelessness. Against this darkness he painted the Bible's most radiant picture of heaven. He proclaimed that the time for its coming was at hand and Christians must endure and stand fast.

If John had lived longer, he could have become a disillusioned old man, for history did not bear out his promises. Rome did not promptly fall; the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, did not come down out of heaven; and Christ and His saints did not begin their thousand-year reign. This troubled some church leaders so much that they refused to accept Revelation into the New Testament canon. "What did John really mean?" they asked, and their answers often took them into strange places. With its mystic numbers, its cloudy symbols, and its unfulfilled promises, Revelation is a perfect mine for those who delve in occult speculations. John probably meant to symbolise Nero when he wrote about the beast whose number is 666, but this has not deterred people from interpreting the beast at different times as Luther, the Pope, Napoleon, and even Hitler. It was doubtless speculations such as these which led one old commentator to remark that Revelation either finds a man mad or leaves him so! Revelation cannot be interpreted in terms of the future. It was written as a tract for its own time and its meaning must lie in the first century. It is there that we must search for clues to its symbols and ideas. Fascinating as it is to try to solve the riddles of John's meanings and to trace the sources of his dreams in first-century life and literature, the real value of Revelation for us does not lie in these, but in John's cry of triumph out of the dark night of persecution.

Revelation stands high among the creations of the human imagination. Though its interpretation is vague and its prophecies failed to come true, this book is an imperishable Christian heritage. Poets and artists under the spell of its extraordinary power have created some of the world's finest literature and art. It gave the Church its dream of heaven and its assurance of blessedness. Many a triumphant hymn is clothed in its phrases and images: "Ten thousand times ten thousand, in sparkling raiment bright." "I heard a sound of voices around the great white throne." "Hark! the sound of holy voices, chanting at the crystal sea."

Fortunately Revelation is not the only book Christians possess. If it were, there would probably be no Christianity, for it represents only one aspect of our heritage. Here are none of the historical records of the synoptic Gospels. We miss in it Paul's transforming faith and the spiritual insight of John, the Elder of Ephesus. But a glory shines from the pages of Revelation that can be found nowhere else in the New Testament. Here stands an unshakable conviction that God reigns and that Christ's message is the truth. Though Rome's power seemed unconquerable, nevertheless:

> The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.
>
> REVELATION 11. 15

From an exile on the island of Patmos came this poem of triumph. The long Bible story which began in Eden here comes at last to its fitting end with heaven shining in jewelled splendour and all the trumpets sounding.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

FORMING THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE CANON

THE Bible of Jesus and the Apostles was the Old Testament. Jesus often referred to the ancient Scriptures of His race; Peter used Old Testament quotations to prove his points; and Paul "reasoned with them out of the scriptures". During the Church's early years this was the authoritative Book read whenever Christians assembled. We are told that zealous converts "searched the scriptures daily". Very soon, as we have seen, the Church produced books, not to rival or supplant the Old Testament, but to meet Christianity's own definite needs. Little did Paul realise on the day in A.D. 50 in Corinth, when he began dictating his letter to Thessalonica, that he was composing the first book of a New Testament. Many of the Apostles still lived. Christian traditions and teachings were still in their oral period. The need for an official collection of writings to define and preserve Christianity had not yet become urgent.

The first hint of such a need comes from the preface to Luke's Gospel written about A.D. 75 or 90.

> Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us . . . it seemed good to me also . . . to write unto thee in order . . . that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.
>
> LUKE 1. 1–4

It was doubtless the publication of Luke-Acts and the resulting interest in Paul's career that led to the collection and publication of the ten Epistles of Paul about A.D. 90. This was followed by the collection and publication of the fourfold Gospel about A.D. 115. These two collections were well known by A.D. 150 when a nameless author wrote II Peter. He bent over his papyrus sheet and added his final sentence: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." Then he put down his pen never imagining that with his words the writing of the New Testament was ended. In the hundred years between A.D. 50 and 150 Christianity produced its twenty-seven imperishable books.

Before the end of the second century the main books of the New Testament had taken their places: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I and II Thessalonians, Philemon, I Peter and I John. But what of the others? These were the disputed books and for many years remained on the fringe of the canon. They included: Hebrews and Revelation; the Pastoral Epistles: I and II Timothy and Titus; the Epistle of James; II Peter; II and III John; and Jude. With these were associated such books as *The Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Didache*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Epistle of Clement*, and others popular in their own day. Finally, people began to say that a book was scriptural if its author was an Apostle or closely associated with an Apostle. Then by a sort of pious fiction the names of Apostles were attached to anonymous books thought to be inspired, and the books were included in the canon. Hebrews was attributed to Paul; the Epistles of James and Jude, to the brothers of the Lord; the Epistles of John and Revelation, to the Apostle John; and the Epistles of Peter to Simon Peter. In this way arose the misleading traditions of authorship which the scholars of our own day attempted to put right.

Our last word concerns the great Christian scholar and leader, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria. It was his custom to send an Easter letter to the clergy of his diocese. When Athanasius sat down to write his annual letter for the year A.D. 367, he decided to include in it a list of all the Christian writings which he thought rightly belonged to the canon. The list he sent included twenty-seven books and it was the first official list to correspond exactly with the table of contents in our New Testament. Thus the Festal Letter of Athanasius of A.D. 367 is a landmark in the history of the canon. At various Church councils in the years that followed, Athanasius' list was widely adopted.

There is an amusing old legend that attempts to tell how the canonical books were chosen. According to this story there was once a council whose members were deadlocked on the question of the canon. In this quandary they placed all their books at the foot of the altar and prayed that God would show them which were the inspired volumes. Thereupon with one accord, all the truly inspired books hopped upon the altar! However convenient such a method of choice might be, the Church decided, of course, in an entirely different way what books to include in the canon. The choice was not quickly made, and fortunately no board ot experts was able to impose its opinion upon the Church. Even Athanasius and the councils did little more than ratify a choice that had already emerged after years of experience. Ultimately, we owe the New Testament canon to multitudes of Christians everywhere who listened to the Scripture readings Sunday after Sunday and weighed what they heard on the scales of life itself. It was the final judgment of the whole Church after two and a half centuries of use that selected out of the great mass of literature the twenty-seven books which are the bulwark of Christianity.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

BIBLES COPIED BY HAND

ROLLS AND CODICES

CHRISTIANITY with its enormous vitality spread quickly throughout the Roman World. Wherever the new religion went, the Christian writings accompanied it.

At first the books were all written on papyrus imported from Egypt. There, papyrus is a reed which still grows along the banks of the upper Nile. From time immemorial the pith of this papyrus reed was cut into thin strips which were then laid side by side. A second layer of strips was placed on top and at right angles to the first. When soaked in water, hammered, dried in the sun, and finally polished, a tough, smooth sheet was obtained. Twenty or more sheets pasted together formed the roll upon which the scribes of the ancient world copied their books. They wrote in solid columns several inches wide, with only a narrow margin separating the columns. A book of average size required a strip of papyrus about thirty-five feet long, and when this was rolled up it formed a bulky object. When not in use the roll was stored in a capsa or bookbox similar to a large can with a lid or to one of the pigeonholes of an old bookcase. Such were the books of the ancient world and from them many of our words about books are derived. The word "paper" comes from papyrus. "Volume" comes from the word describing the opening and closing of a scroll, namely *volumen* meaning "to roll". The very word "Bible" reminds us of the early papyrus rolls, for the Greeks called papyrus *Biblos*, in honour of the Phoenician seaport where they purchased it.

While Christianity was still young, a change came in the form of books and this change had a marked influence on the New Testament. The time-honoured roll began to be replaced by a book with leaves or pages. Such a leaf book was called a codex and this word gives a clue to its origin. For their brief notes the Romans used wooden tablets coated with a thin layer of wax in which they cut letters with a stylus. Several tablets would be bound together along one edge, perhaps with leather thongs threaded through holes bored in the wood. These bound edges looked like a section of a tree trunk which in Latin was called a *caudex*. A bound collection of wooden tablets began to be called a caudex or codex. Soon, in place of wooden tablets, a stack of folded papyrus sheets was used. These sheets were fastened together in quires by sewing through the centre fold, and the leaf book so obtained was also called a codex. Some of these early papyrus codices, preserved for centuries beneath the dry sands of Egypt, have recently been discovered, and among them there are far more Christian books than Greek, Roman, or Hebrew. Probably the early Christian Church, unfettered by synagogue custom or literary habit, became the pioneer in using the newest book form. From every point of view the codex was more convenient than the roll. It was easier to turn over pages than to unroll yards of papyrus. A roll usually has writing on one side only, while the sheets of a codex have writing on both sides. It is obvious that twice as much material will fit into a codex as into a roll having the same amount of papyrus. It was, moreover, possible to make a fairly thick codex, but too bulky a roll could not be conveniently handled.

Book publishing was a thriving business in the Graeco-Roman world where an abundance of slave labour took the place of modern printing presses. A Roman publishing house was similar to those in the Jewish quarter of Alexandria where we have already watched Septuagints being made. Instead of the roar and clatter of our presses there was only the droning voice of a reader dictating to a battery of copyists. With seventy-five slaves working on a book that required eighteen hours to complete, a publisher could produce an edition of one thousand copies in a single month. That of course meant that the slaves worked steadily at the rate of sixty hours a week. After the book was copied and proofread, its sheets or quires were sewed together and often placed between wooden boards. They were now ready to be put on sale in booksellers' shops in the market places of Ephesus, Alexandria, and Rome.

How soon Christian books were published and sold through the usual trade channels we do not know. The poverty of the early Church and the persecutions it suffered doubtless prevented New Testament books from being as freely manufactured and sold as the Greek and Roman classics. But in spite of all obstacles, ways were found to copy and distribute them. Where professional copyists could not be hired, amateur copyists took over and zealously laboured the long hours necessary to produce a single volume. Unfortunately these amateur copyists left a plentiful harvest of errors in their manuscripts. Strict accuracy was apparently not their goal, and the text at this time suffered many corruptions which modern scholars have taken great pains to sift and remove.

By the end of the second century, the written records of Christianity were distributed far and wide. In libraries, in the capsa or bookboxes of private homes, and in the wooden chests of early Christian churches lay copies of New Testament books side by side with the Old Testament in Greek. Sometimes the only property a church possessed was a wooden chest kept in someone's house. In this chest would be stored the sacred vessels, the Septuagint, and a few books of the New Testament.

Church chests in great centres like Antioch, Caesarea, Ephesus, Corinth, Alexandria, and Rome must have held many treasures. There were the widely distributed twenty-seven books we know so well, together with other books popular in their own day but now forgotten. Some churches must have possessed original manuscripts. Perhaps one of the Galatian churches still treasured the letter from Paul which contained his own distinctive handwriting in the words:

> Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.
>
> GALATIANS 6. 11

Hundreds of minor variations crept into the New Testament text, and though hardly any of these involve major points, today's Bible reader wants each word and phrase to be exactly as it left the pen of the author and before a thousand successive copyists had their chance to alter the original. This is the goal toward which modern textual experts labour. They assemble many old manuscripts and compare the variations. Studying these and sifting all the evidence, scholars begin to discover what the original text must have been. Their work is like an elaborate puzzle and as they solve it bit by bit the true text of the New Testament emerges. In a later chapter we shall learn of the discovery of some of the ancient manuscripts with which these experts work.

A new writing material was beginning to replace papyrus. Tradition says that in the second century B.C. the King of Egypt learned that King Eumenes II of Pergamon was building up a library that bid fair to surpass his own royal library at Alexandria. To end this rivalry King Ptolemy laid an embargo on papyrus, which Eumenes had been importing in large quantities from Egypt. Thereupon, Eumenes ordered his craftsmen to find a substitute. They took the skins of sheep, goats, or calves, washed, scraped, and stretched them and finally rubbed them with pumice until a smooth writing surface was obtained. Because Pergamon was its traditional place of origin, animal skins processed for writing were called in Latin *charta pergamena* or in English "parchment". The finest quality of parchment was made from calf skin and took its name from the calf or "veal"; it was called "vellum". Parchment or vellum was far more durable than papyrus; it was likewise more expensive. But by the fourth century the Church began to use this superior writing material, and from this time come the two oldest and finest Greek manuscript Bibles now in existence. One is the Codex Vaticanus now in the Vatican Library and the other is the Codex Sinaiticus in the British Museum. If these famous Bibles are not themselves two of the fifty copies known to have been made for Constantine in A.D. 332, they are doubtless similar to them. From now on the Bible was safe. Soon beautiful editions written in silver or gold on parchment stained with purple dye began to appear. Some of these sumptuous volumes, which St. Jerome criticised as useless luxuries, are in existence to-day.

With the fall of the Roman Empire the publishing business declined and the Church took over the production of Bibles. Monasteries throughout Europe set aside a room called the scriptorium where monks patiently copied books by hand. They began to decorate their manuscript books, first with pen drawings and later with painted illustrations and illuminations of remarkable beauty. The artists of the Middle Ages lavished some of their most exquisite work on manuscript Bibles, many of which still survive in the museums and libraries of Europe and America. To-day when we see the delicacy of the miniature illustrations, with their intricate ornamentation and their clear, jewel-like colours, we realise that all this is part of the homage the Middle Ages paid to the Bible.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

ST. JEROME'S VULGATE AND OTHER VERSIONS

CONSTANTINE's beautiful vellum codices had been in use about fifty years when the Bible reached a new milestone. About A.D. 375 a party of Roman scholars on a "grand tour" of the Mediterranean reached Antioch, the city in which the followers of Christ had first been called Christians. Antioch was in the midst of a severe outbreak of fever which one of the Roman tourists contracted and of which he died. A second one also lay dangerously ill of the fever. This was Jerome, perhaps the most brilliant and learned member of the little group. He had been born in Dalmatia of wealthy Christian parents who gave their son the best education of the day in grammar, rhetoric, law, philosophy, and Latin poetry. Jerome was baptised by the Pope himself, but his interest in Christianity was only lukewarm. He enjoyed searching through the catacombs of Rome for martyrs' graves and he was clever at deciphering inscriptions carved on tombs, but Jerome disliked reading the Scriptures. In his day these had been translated from the original Greek into a crude Latin which offended the ear of a scholar like Jerome accustomed to the majestic cadences of the Latin poets. The Old-Latin version of the Bible suffered in comparison to Virgil, Horace, and Cicero.

One night in Antioch while Jerome's fever was at its height he dreamed that Christ stood beside his bed and reproached him, saying: "You care more about being a follower of Cicero than of Me."

Stung by this rebuke Jerome cried: "O Lord, thou knowest that when I read secular books I deny Thee!"

When Jerome recovered from the fever he decided to turn from the Odes of Pindar to the Psalms of David and to devote his life to the Holy Scriptures instead of Greek and Latin classics. Immediately he began to learn Hebrew and to perfect his Greek, and as a further evidence of his change of heart he was ordained to the priesthood.

On his return to Rome he was introduced to Pope Damasus. At this time many others besides Jerome criticised the Old-Latin translation of the Bible. The Pope himself was concerned about this and was searching for someone to revise the Old-Latin translation for him. Jerome was just the man he needed for this task and Damasus immediately commissioned him to carry it out.

In A.D. 383 Jerome completed his revision of the Latin Gospels and published it in Rome with a dedication to Pope Damasus. The following year the Pope died and Jerome was mentioned as his successor, but, as nothing came of this he returned to his lifelong work of revision and translation.

He was no longer satisfied with the Septuagint version of the Old Testament but desired to translate directly from the original Hebrew text. Though it is not clear exactly how much of the new Latin version Jerome completed before he finally laid down his pen, it is fairly certain that the major portion of it is his work. He certainly translated the canonical Old Testament books from the Hebrew, the Psalms from the Septuagint, and he revised the Old-Latin version of the Gospels and possibly other New Testament books as well. The common people who could not read Greek now had an excellent version of the Bible in their own tongue. For this outstanding service the Church gave Jerome the title of saint.

At first men were slow to accept Jerome's work, for they were so accustomed to the Old-Latin phrases that any change in them seemed irreverent; but in time the hostility that always greets a new translation began to die down as people learned to appreciate the superior quality of Jerome's work. His version was universally read throughout Western Europe in homes, schools, churches, monasteries, and cathedrals and because of this widespread use it was accorded the title of the Vulgate.

Through all the Middle Ages the Vulgate remained a shining beacon of civilisation and Christianity, and for a thousand years its Latin words were read, recited, chanted, sung, and spoken in prayer all over Western Europe. Upon it depended the literature and art of Europe from the fourth century to the Reformation. It inspired Dante, Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, and the sculptors of Chartres. It provided subject matter for glassmakers, ivory carvers, enamel workers, tapestry weavers, jewellers, woodcarvers, stonecutters, and all the artists and artisans of Europe. At last, when printing was invented, the first book believed to have come from the press of Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz about 1456 was no other than a copy of St. Jerome's Vulgate.

Though the Vulgate was by far the most important Bible version issued by the fifth century, there had been many others. Any translation from the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew for the Old Testament, Greek for the New, is technically known as a version. The Septuagint was the first version of the Old Testament and the Old-Latin was doubtless the first version of the New Testament. Tatian's Syriac *Diatessaron* was another version and this was followed by translations of the separate Gospels in Syriac made before A.D. 200. As we shall see in a later chapter, these ancient Syriac Gospels, lost for centuries, were discovered in modern times and have helped scholars reconstruct the original Greek text of which they were very early translations. Coptic is the Egyptian language written in Greek letters, and Coptic versions are known to have existed by A.D. 250. In the fourth century peoples living in the widely separated lands of Armenia, Abyssinia, and Gaul had Bibles in their own languages. An alphabet had to be invented for the Scriptures in Armenian, for no written literature then existed in that language. In their classical Ethiopic language the black people of Abyssinia possessed a Bible a thousand years before there was one in English.

When Ulfilas began to convert the Goths he needed a Bible in their language. About A.D. 300 he made a Gothic translation of the entire Bible with the exception of the Book of Kings which he feared might encourage the warlike spirit of his converts. This Gothic Bible is the oldest surviving piece of literature in the great Teutonic family of languages to which both German and English belong. One of the finest manuscripts of this Gothic version is called the Codex Argenteus, for it is written in silver letters on purple-stained vellum. Made in North Italy in the fifth or sixth century, it belonged for a time to the monastery of Werden in Germany. From there it was taken to Sweden as part of the booty of the Thirty Years War. Now it is one of the great treasures of the University Library at Upsala.

A thousand years after Ulfilas' Gothic Bible there appeared in the fourteenth century the first complete English version. This, as we shall see, was the translation made by John Wycliffe and his associates who gave English-speaking people the first Bible in their own tongue.

There is a curious old stone in China at Chang 'an in Shensi Province. This stone bears an inscription in both Chinese and Syriac and it is believed to have been set up by Nestorian Christian missionaries who visited China in A.D. 781. The inscription states that in the New Testament there are twenty-seven books. Later Marco Polo found a string of Nestorian churches along the trade routes from Baghdad to Peiping. Did the Syriac-speaking missionaries who founded these churches bring Bibles with them and did they ever translate these Syriac

Bibles into Chinese? Surely they translated parts, at least, of the Bible into the languages of their Chinese converts. But to-day's Chinese Bible stems from a different lineage.

Thus the Bible began to span the gulfs separating peoples of different languages. The Septuagint and the Old-Latin Version were the first Greek and Latin bridges, but for Western Europe for a thousand years St. Jerome's Vulgate became the chief bridge. Besides the Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Gothic versions more and more languages and dialects were added until by 1961 the entire Bible or portions of it existed in nearly 1,200 different languages.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

CAEDMON, BEDE, AND WYCLIFFE'S BIBLE

THE story of the arrival of the Bible in Britain is lost in obscurity. Tradition says that thirty years after the Crucifixion, Philip the Apostle went to Britain and founded the Church at Glastonbury to which Joseph of Arimathaea brought the Holy Grail, the cup used at the Last Supper. These legends, however, fail to mention the Bible. Perhaps the first copy of the Scriptures came to this distant outpost of the Roman Empire in the baggage of some Christian legionary. There must have been at least one copy of the Vulgate in St. Augustine's travelling bag when he landed in England in A.D. 596 with orders from Pope Gregory the Great to preach the Gospel to the Angles and Saxons. His mission was successful, and before long there was established on English soil a Church whose Bible was the Vulgate. This Latin version remained the bulwark of English Christianity for centuries and not until the time of Chaucer in the fourteenth century, when the English language began to emerge in its present form, did the entire Bible appear in English.

How then did the common folk of Britain learn Bible stories and teachings during the many centuries when Latin was the language of the Church? Answers to that question can be found in the stories of Caedmon and the Venerable Bede.

Caedmon was a simple, unlettered herdsman who sat one night at a feast in a great hall where each guest in turn was expected to sing a song. Dreading the moment when the harp would be handed to him and he would have to sing, Caedmon fled to the barn and lay down in the straw to sleep. He dreamed that a stranger appeared and said to him: "Sing of the beginning of created things."

The song he composed in his dream remained in his memory and the next morning as he sang it to the steward of the monastery of Whitby, Caedmon knew that he was no longer a poor, dumb herdsman, but a singer and a poet. The steward took him to Hilda, the Abbess of the monastery, and there the learned brothers taught him Bible stories. They translated the Latin stories into Anglo-Saxon, and Caedmon transformed these into songs. So popular were Caedmon's songs that other singers imitated him and thus turned a large part of the Bible into verse. They served to bring to the people of Britain a knowledge of the Bible.

Caedmon's story appeared in *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, written by the Venerable Bede at the monastery of Jarrow.

The Venerable Bede himself ranks with Caedmon among those who helped to bring the Bible to the people. Unfortunately his version of the Gospel of John, which was probably the first Anglo-Saxon prose translation of any part of the Bible, disappeared long ago. In a letter written by one of his friends there is a story of how Bede finished his translation just before his death. It was Easter time, about A.D. 735. Though Bede had been ill and felt his end fast approaching, he continued his work of translating John's Gospel. The young scholar who acted as his scribe feared that the one chapter remaining might be too difficult for his master's failing strength.

"It is easy," replied Bede. "Take your pen and write."

During the day his friends came to his cell to bid him farewell. Finally, as darkness fell Bede's scribe reminded him of the translation.

"Dear master, one more sentence still remains unwritten."

"Write quickly," the dying man said.

"Now it is ended," said the young man as he wrote the final words.

"Well you may say: it is ended. Take my head in your hands and lay me down where I have been wont to pray, that I may call upon my Father."

Lying on the floor of his cell the Venerable Bede died with the *Gloria* upon his lips.

Other translations of portions of the Scriptures followed that of Bede, but England had to wait until the fourteenth century for the first complete Bible in English, which was the version prepared under the leadership of John Wycliffe. It appeared about 1383 while Richard II reigned and Geoffrey Chaucer was at work on his *Canterbury Tales*.

John Wycliffe, one of England's most powerful reformers, was a university man and the master of Balliol College at Oxford. He protested against the wealth and power of the Church, saying that it no longer taught the true message of Christ and the Apostles as contained in the Scriptures. Together with Nicholas of Hereford, and probably other scholars of his reform movement, he translated the entire Bible into English so that people might see for themselves how far the Church had fallen from the teachings of its Founder and how much its worldliness needed to be reformed. "To be ignorant of the Scriptures is to be ignorant of Christ," said Wycliffe. He organised groups of preachers who travelled throughout the country preaching and reading the Scriptures wherever they went. Members of this reform movement were called Lollards. Their number increased rapidly, especially among poor people heavily burdened by the demands of the Church. The clergy became alarmed and forbade the Bible to be translated. The Church banned Wycliffe's version and burned its readers at the stake with their copies hanging from their necks. Wycliffe himself died a natural death, but the authorities dug up his bones and scattered his ashes.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THE FATHER OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

William Tyndale

In Gloucestershire, at Stinchcombe near the border of Wales, there was born in 1494 a child destined to become one of the most important men in the history of the English Bible. This was William Tyndale. The fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 had resulted in the flight of scholars to Western Europe. They brought with them a rich heritage from classical civilisation which acted like a match to the fuse of the Renaissance. Scholars everywhere lectured on the new learning, while the Church rocked under the impact of fresh ideas. The greatest humanist and theologian of the Renaissance was the Dutch priest Erasmus whose lectures at Oxford were still remembered when Tyndale became a student there. The Church was disturbed by this wave of interest in the Bible and feared lest comparative study and criticism of the time-honoured words of the Vulgate, which were now considered sacred, might weaken the authority of the Church. As a candidate for the priesthood Tyndale was forbidden to read the Bible without special authority from his bishop, but even so he seems to have devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures and to the mastery of the Greek language, thus preparing himself for what was later to become his life's work.

After Tyndale was ordained he went to Little Sodbury near Bristol to become the tutor for the children of Sir John Walsh, one of the courtiers of Henry VIII. While he was living in Sir John's household Tyndale's enthusiasm for the Bible began to crystallise into a determination to translate it into English. He was a scholar by training but a reformer at heart. As a scholar he knew both Greek and Latin and this knowledge made him aware of the many differences between the original Greek text and the Vulgate translation. Wycliffe had rendered the Vulgate into English, but as yet no one had translated the Greek text of Erasmus into English. Here was Tyndale's opportunity. As a reformer, Tyndale desired to bring the Church back to the pure religion of an earlier day and he felt that the best way to do this was to put into men's hands a Bible they could read. Most people did not understand the Latin Scriptures, and often the priests themselves did not know the meaning of the words they read.

Church leaders were suspicious of a reformer like Tyndale, and he was often entangled in arguments with them and accused of heresy. One day in fiery indignation he burst out against one of his learned opponents: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the scriptures than the Pope does." He was as good as his word.

In the spring of 1524 he set sail from England never to return. He landed at Hamburg and from here on his story becomes the record of an underground movement, for even on the continent his work met opposition and he was often in danger of arrest at the hands of Church authorities.

By 1525 his first translation of the New Testament was ready for the printer. Six thousand copies were ordered but the printer, Peter Quentel of Cologne, was afraid of risking so many and began work on three thousand copies of quarto size. Only ten sheets of this edition had come from the press when Tyndale heard a knock at his door and a whispered warning that the work had been discovered by Johannes Cochlaeus, one of the bitterest enemies of the Reformation. Cochlaeus had invited the printers to his tavern and had treated them to wine until their tongues became loosened and they openly boasted of the English New Testament they were printing. Thereupon Cochlaeus issued an order stopping the work. Tyndale's warning came just in time. He hastened to Peter Quentel's shop, gathered up the ten finished sheets and escaped with them by boat up the Rhine to Worms. A fragment of this quarto edition, consisting of the twenty-two chapters of Matthew snatched from under Cochlaeus' hand, came to light about a hundred years ago and is now in the British Museum.

At Worms Tyndale found another printer willing to work for him. Meanwhile John Cochlaeus had written to Henry VIII warning him of this impending "invasion of England" and advising him to guard his ports against the "pernicious merchandise". But in spite of this the first New Testaments printed in English were quietly smuggled into England. They were hidden in bales of cotton, in sacks of flour, and in bundles of flax, and once past the officials they found a ready market. At the universities of Oxford and Cambridge the New Testaments were eagerly purchased and in London weavers, blacksmiths, servants, bakers, and wealthy men, all willingly paid up to three pounds for a single copy. No wonder the Church authorities were alarmed. It was not so much the New Testament itself that they feared as Tyndale's notes and comments printed in the margins of the text. In these he sharply criticised the Church and its officials, and pointed out to his readers how far religion in their day had departed from Christ's teachings. Following in the steps of Wycliffe and Luther, Tyndale used the Bible as a weapon with which to reform the Church.

The books were eagerly bought, circulated, and read. The authorities bought up as many copies as they could find and destroyed them, but this, as Tyndale gleefully remarked, only put more money in his pocket to finance another edition. So successful were the authorities in their destruction of this first New Testament printed in English that to-day only two copies of it are known to exist. One is a fragment now in the library of St. Paul's Cathedral. The other lacks a title page but is otherwise the only perfect copy surviving of the three thousand first issued at Worms in 1525. It is owned by the Baptist College in Bristol, and of all printed English Bibles this is surely the greatest treasure.

The storm that greeted Tyndale's first translation of the New Testament did not deter him from continuing his work. Though he was in constant danger and often moved to escape arrest, he continued translating in Worms, Hamburg, and Antwerp, turning his eleven years of exile into fruitful years. He took up the study of Hebrew so that he might translate the Old Testament, as he had the New Testament, from its original language, but it is on his revised New Testament of 1534 that his fame as a translator chiefly rests. This is the only book whose title page bears his name:

> The Newe Testament dylygently corrected and compared with the Greke By Willyam Tindale: and fynesshed in the yere of oure Lorde God A.M.D. & XXXIIII in the moneth of November.

Of the twelve or more surviving copies of this edition perhaps the most interesting is the volume now in the British Museum. This is printed on vellum and decorated with woodcuts and illuminated capitals. Its gold edges are inscribed in red letters with the words: *Anna Regina Angliae*, for this copy once belonged to Anne Boleyn, wife of Henry VIII.

In 1535 Tyndale was arrested and imprisoned, and for sixteen months he suffered boredom and cold as a prisoner in Vilvorden Castle outside Brussels. In a letter written to the authorities at this time he made his pitiful requests for a warmer cap and coat and for a piece of cloth to patch his leggings. He asked to be allowed to have a lamp in the evening, saying it was wearisome to sit alone in the dark. Most of all he begged for his Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary so that he might pass his time in study.

In spite of his friends' efforts to save him, he was tried for heresy, condemned, and on 6 October, 1536, he was strangled and his body burned at the stake. His last words were the cry: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes!"

Tyndale's dying prayer was nearer to being answered than he knew, for in that very year his New Testament was printed on English soil for the first time, and from then on to our own day a steady stream of English Bibles has issued from the presses. Tyndale's cause had triumphed.

Tyndale's work became the cornerstone of the English Bible, and all the translators following him built upon his foundation. As his goal was accuracy and complete faithfulness to the original Greek or Hebrew he became independent of all other renderings, however honoured. His work was honest and scholarly, revealing on every page his basic integrity. There was a mingled simplicity and grandeur in his sentences that stemmed from Saxon directness and Latin majesty. He possessed a sense of poetry and his ear was delicately attuned to the music and rhythm of phrases. His magical harmonies persisted through successive editions and can still be heard in the Authorised Version, ninety per cent of which, it is estimated, comes from his translation.

Here is Tyndale's translation of Hebrews 1. 10–12. Its extraordinary felicities of expression and rhythm are preserved almost intact in our Authorised Version:

> And thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth. And the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure. They all shall wax old as doth a garment: and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same always, and thy years shall not fail.

We owe to Tyndale many a familiar phrase like these which have become part of the very texture of the English language: the burden and heat of the day; eat, drink, and be merry; in Him we live, move, and have our being; ye cannot serve God and Mammon; consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; a prophet hath no honour in his own country. It is interesting to note that Tyndale introduced the word Jehovah as the name for God. Where he learned this word we do not know. Tyndale's error persisted in translation after translation, acquiring such an aura of sacredness that it is now almost impossible to discontinue the use of Jehovah and substitute for it the more accurate Yahweh.

Here is Tyndale's rendering of Matthew 6. 9–13, the first English translation of the Lord's Prayer directly from the Greek:

> O oure father which art in heven, halewed be thy name. Let thy kingdom come. Thy wyll be fulfilled, as well in erth, as hit ys in heven. Geve vs this daye oure dayly breade. And forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve them whych treaspas vs. Lede vs nott into temptacion, but delyvre vs from yvell. Amen.

When the spelling is modernised and a word or two changed this becomes the Lord's Prayer of the English-speaking world. With this example before us we can see why William Tyndale, the English clergyman, scholar, and martyr is known as the Father of the English Bible.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

THE LINEAGE OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

Six Important Bibles

In the seventy-five years after Tyndale's death six important Bibles appeared: Coverdale's, Matthew's, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, the Bishops' Bible, and the Rheims-Douay Bible. Edition followed edition, and it often seemed as though the printing presses would never satisfy the demand. Men risked their lives to bring out the Scriptures; kings and bishops hastened to issue authorised editions; printers enlarged their shops and bought new equipment; rival religious parties printed their own versions. From the reign of Henry VIII to the accession of James I the English Bible passed through a period of amazing activity.

Why were Bibles so much in demand at this time? The answer to that goes back to the state of the Church. Even loyal churchmen realised all was not well. Many of the clergy were ignorant. People were superstitious. Religion consisted largely of masses, confession, prayers to the saints, and the buying of indulgences. Of the Bible only those portions of the Gospels and Epistles used in the liturgy were known, and these were intoned in an unintelligible Latin. A few learned theologians in the monasteries read the rare copies of the Bible, but for the lay people of Western Europe it had become an almost unknown Book. Then came Erasmus' Greek text and its accompanying new Latin translation, together with a whole series of modern language versions. The printing presses of Europe produced these Bibles, and enterprising merchants distributed them far and wide. The result was a religious upheaval. Men everywhere read about Jesus and His disciples and they rubbed their eyes in amazement. Could their religion with its Borgia Pope, its superstitions, and its worldly clergy be the religion founded by Jesus? The Reformation spread like wildfire among men who asked such questions. Men caught up in this movement read the Bible and created a demand for more and more copies of it. All this was behind the immense translating and printing activity of the sixteenth century.

To Miles Coverdale belongs the honour of bringing out the first printed English Bible complete from Genesis to Revelation. This was in 1535.

Then in order to meet the continuing demand, two London booksellers, Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch, published the so-called Matthew Bible in 1537. The work of preparing this edition was supposed to have been done by a certain Thomas Matthew, but as no such person seems to have existed, the name was evidently an assumed one used to hide the identity of the real translator. This is believed to be none other than Tyndale himself.

Following the three private publications of Tyndale, Coverdale, and "Matthew", came England's first authorised Bible, the Great Bible of 1539. This was a revision of the Matthew Bible and it was made by Coverdale. It was a handsome folio volume, beautifully printed on the best quality of paper. The court painter Hans Holbein, who probably designed the title page, left no doubt in anyone's mind that this book was fully authorised, for he showed King Henry VIII seated on a throne distributing copies of it, while a crowd of his subjects are pictured with open mouths out of which come streamers with the words "Vivat Rex".

As evidence of the great change which had taken place in the English church since Tyndale's day, clergymen were now ordered to set up this Bible "in sum conuenient place wythin the said church that ye haue cure of, where-as your parishioners may most comodiously resorte to the same and reade it". At St. Paul's Cathedral in London no less than six copies were chained to six of the pillars and all day long these were surrounded by crowds of people earnestly listening while someone read from the new book. The reading caused many an argument in which voices rose so high and the crowds became so noisy that Bible reading had to be forbidden whenever there was a service in the Cathedral. Far and wide throughout England copies of the Great Bible were distributed. Though its text was superseded by later translations, the Psalter of the Great Bible is still used in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

The next three Bibles were rival volumes put out by different religious parties: the Puritans, the English Bishops, and the Roman Catholics. In the Swiss city of Geneva lived the group of English Puritans who had fled from home during the persecutions under Queen Mary. These refugees issued a Bible in 1560, edited by William Whittingham and named for the city in which they had found safety. This became the Bible of the Reformation and of John Calvin and John Knox. It was a scholarly revision with helpful notes in the margin. This was the first Bible to divide its chapters into numbered verses thus making them convenient for reference and quotation. It was smaller in size than the Great Bible and less expensive. All these things made the Geneva Bible popular for two generations as the family Bible of England. It was commonly called the "Breeches Bible" because the translation of Genesis 3. 7 reads: "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches."

Few books are popular enough to require reprinting but from 1560 to 1640 the Geneva Bible was issued in one hundred and fifty editions. If it had not been for this great popularity, the Bishops' Bible of 1568 might never have appeared. Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, was alarmed to see a Puritan version, containing many controversial notes, supplanting the authorised Great Bible of the Church. He knew that people found the Geneva volume cheaper and more convenient to use in their homes and that they often criticised the Great Bible, which was appointed to be read in churches, as an inferior translation. To remedy this the Bishops' Bible was prepared and printed. It was a magnificent folio volume bearing on the title page a rather ugly portrait of Queen Elizabeth holding the sceptre and orb. This was the official Bible which every bishop was supposed to set up in his hall for the use of servants and strangers. As single copies cost nearly twenty-five pounds it never supplanted the smaller and cheaper Geneva Bible in English homes.

So far all the English versions belonged to the Tyndale "family", being either revisions of his text or based on his work. The next version to appear was issued by the Roman Catholics, who heartily disapproved of the current English versions. While this Roman Catholic version did not belong to the Tyndale group it was nevertheless influenced by his work. The translator was a former Oxford scholar named Gregory Martin who fled to France with many other Roman Catholics when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne of England. The refugees settled in the French city of Rheims and later moved to Douay. They established a college in which Gregory Martin became lecturer in Hebrew and Holy Scripture. He set himself a stint of translating two chapters a day and by 1582 the Rheims New Testament was finished. The complete Rheims-Douay Bible did not appear until 1609.

CHAPTER FORTY

THE AUTHORISED VERSION OF 1611

ON Monday, 16 January, 1604, a group of solemn Church leaders filed into the council chamber at Hampton Court Palace for a meeting with the new king, James I, to settle difficulties between two rival groups: the High Church party and the Low Church or Puritan party.

James came in, took his seat, and opened the conference. In appearance he was anything but regal, for the quilted doublet he wore as a protection against assassination made him seem more ungainly than he really was. The assembled leaders looked in vain for a likeness between him and his beautiful mother, the ill-fated Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Unfortunately the King's manners were as disappointing as his appearance. He rudely scolded the Puritans and declared that he would force them to accept his point of view or else drive them out of his kingdom. The conference seemed doomed to failure.

At this point, when deadlock promised to be the only result, Dr. John Reynolds rose and made a suggestion. Everyone listened to him intently, for Reynolds was the spokesman for the Puritan party, besides being a famous linguist, scholar, and the president of Corpus Christi College at Oxford. He moved that a new translation of the Bible be made because those being used at that time were, as he said, "corrupt and not answerable to the truth of the Original".

Taken by surprise at this unexpected proposal and feeling perhaps a touch of remorse for his rudeness to the Puritans, James quickly agreed to the motion. He was himself something of a Bible student, having translated the Psalms into verse and written a paraphrase of Revelation. He declared that special pains should be taken to produce a uniform translation and he drew up rules for the translators to follow, adding that he had never yet seen a Bible well translated into English.

The Hampton Court Conference adjourned without accomplishing the purpose for which it met; nevertheless, from the point of view of the English Bible it was one of the most important conferences on record. Soon fifty-four of England's greatest scholars were appointed for the work of translation.

The translators were guided by elaborate rules which instructed them to follow the Bishops' Bible as far as the truth of the original permitted, but allowed them to use Tyndale's, Coverdale's, Matthew's, and the Geneva Bible wherever these translations were better. Actually, we know that they used the Rheims New Testament as well, for many of its phrases are incorporated in their work. For more than two years the scholars translated, revised, corrected, and copied. As soon as one group finished its assigned portion, a copy of it was sent to the other companies for criticism. In those days many thick Bible manuscripts must have shuttled back and forth between Oxford, Cambridge, and Westminster. Slowly a new translation emerged, based upon the best work of a generation of translators and perfected by the painstaking labour of the foremost scholars of the day.

At length, in 1611 there issued from the London press of Robert Barker the first edition of this Bible.

Copies of this large, beautifully printed, first edition still exist, and book collectors offer large sums for them. If you ever see a very old Bible, turn to the third chapter of Ruth. If the fifteenth verse reads: "He measured six measures of barley and laid it on her and *he* went into the citie," you may know that you hold in your hands the historic first edition which came from Robert Barker's press in 1611. "He" was a misprint which was corrected in later editions to read "she went into the citie". From this misprint came the name by which this rare first edition is known among collectors: the "He" Bible.

The first edition of 1611 is thought to have numbered twenty thousand copies, a large gain over Tyndale's first three thousand copies. How many copies of the Authorised Bible have been printed since 1611 no one knows, but it is certainly many millions. The Authorised Version has been the Bible of the English-speaking world for more than three hundred years.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

THE DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS

Codices and Palimpsests

One day in 1628 a package from the East was unloaded at an English port. It had been sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Cyril Lucaris, and it contained a gift for Charles I. Inside the package the King found an old hand-written Greek Bible consisting of nearly eight hundred vellum leaves, each measuring ten by twelve inches and containing two columns of beautifully written Greek. Not sharing his father's interest in the Scriptures, Charles I turned his book over to the scholars. They were amazed when they saw its distinctive handwriting. Clearly, this Greek codex from Constantinople was older than any other they had previously known, for it must have been made before the ninth century. Exactly when and where had it been written: that was the question.

The handwriting experts who were now consulted said that this Greek codex was written in the style employed in Alexandria in the fifth century. It was, therefore, named the Codex Alexandrinus, and when the royal library was presented to the nation, the codex was deposited in the British Museum where it is to-day.

The Codex Alexandrinus came first in the long parade of ancient manuscripts. It awoke a new interest in the Greek text of the Bible and it fired experts with zeal to find older and better manuscripts. All over Europe they ransacked old libraries and explored shelves and cupboards, where manuscripts had been collecting dust for centuries. Some of these had been rescued from Constantinople by Greek scholars who fled before the invading Turks in 1453.

Before long two other Greek Bibles came to light even older than the Codex Alexandrinus. One of these is the Codex Vaticanus, generally considered the most important manuscript Bible in existence. Like the Codex Alexandrinus it is believed to have been made in Egypt at Alexandria, but it was written a hundred years earlier and scholars date it before A.D. 350. No one knows its long history nor how it finally came to rest in the great library of the Vatican. It was doubtless originally made for some important person or some great church in Constantinople, where it remained until the Turks captured the city in 1453. Who brought it to Rome we do not know, but to-day the Codex Vaticanus is recognised as one of the oldest and best authorities in existence for the Greek text of the Bible, and it is the supreme treasure of the Vatican Libary.

The story of our other fourth-century codex is one of the romances of Biblical scholarship. The man responsible for its discovery was Count Tischendorf. Whenever he visited ancient libraries in remote corners of the world this noted German biblical scholar always searched for old Greek manuscript Bibles. In the month of May, 1844, he visited the Monastery of St. Catherine at the foot of Mount Sinai, near the southern end of the triangular-shaped peninsular of Sinai. One day in the great hall he saw a basket full of old parchments which the librarian told him were about to be burned as trash. Tischendorf looked these over and to his amazement found a pile of sheets from a Greek Bible older than any he had ever seen. The uncial handwriting indicated that this book belonged to the fourth century. Here was an incomparable treasure about to be destroyed! From Tischendorf's undisguised excitement the monastery authorities realised their mistake and gathered up the pile of old sheets. Forty-three of them, including Chronicles, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and Esther, they allowed Tischendorf to take away, but the others they kept at Sinai.

The memory of the other sheets haunted him for fifteen years until finally he returned to St. Catherine's Monastery, hoping to see them again. He spent several days in the chilly, dark library without finding the great treasure he had once saved from the fire. Perhaps it had been burned after all, he thought, or some other scholar had carried it off. As his visit had proved a failure and as nothing was to be gained by remaining longer, he ordered his Bedouin to bring the dromedaries to the gate the next morning so that he might return to Cairo.

The evening before he left, Tischendorf was invited by the steward of the monastery to his cell for refreshment after their walk. Their conversation eventually came around to the subject of Greek Bibles.

"And I, too, have a Septuagint," said the steward, taking from the shelf over his door, where extra coffee cups were stored, a large volume wrapped in red cloth. Removing the cover, Tischendorf saw the very book for which he had been searching. Here were the fragments he had rescued from the basket fifteen years before, and here also were other parts of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Trying to disguise his great joy, Tischendorf asked if he might examine the book in his own room. Permission was granted and all night long in his cold, dimly lit cell Tischendorf studied this ancient and important manuscript.

In return for a favour, the monks of St. Catherine's Monastery gave this fourth-century codex to the Czar of Russia. A Bedouin brought it by camel from Sinai to Cairo, and from there Tischendorf carried it to the Summer Palace at Tsarskoye Selo where it was presented to their Imperial Majesties in November, 1859. The scholarly world was electrified by Tischendorf's discovery and one learned Bible student was heard to remark:

"I would rather have discovered the Sinaitic manuscript than the Koh-i-noor (diamond) of the Queen of England."

The text was immediately printed for the use of scholars, and photographic fascimiles were made, but the manuscript itself remained in Russia until 1933. In that year the Soviet Government sold it to the British Museum for £100,000, part of which was raised by public subscription. It remains in the Museum with the Codex Alexandrinus, the two outstanding manuscript Bibles in England.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

TRANSLATING CONTINUES

The Revised and Other Versions

Though the Authorised Version with all its stately beauty and splendid imagery reigned supreme for more than two and a half centuries, other translations were made under its august shadow. Even the Authorised Version, which has been called the "noblest monument of English prose", was itself constantly improved and corrected. Its spelling was modernised, its punctuation revised, and several thousand other changes were introduced. This, however, was not enough. The English language is constantly discarding old words, introducing new ones, changing meanings, and altering forms. This fact together with the new Bible discoveries soon prompted people to ask for new translations.

As early as 1755 John Wesley published a revised New Testament "for plain, unlettered men who understand only their Mother Tongue". Using a different Greek text from that employed in 1611, he made a careful translation that includes twelve thousand variations from the Authorised Version.

When Dr. Edward Harwood made his translation in 1768 he declared that he would be rewarded "if men of cultivated and improved minds, especially YOUTH, could be allured by the innocent stratagem of a *modern style*, to read a book, which is now, alas! too generally neglected and disregarded by the young and gay". Possibly the "young and gay" of the eighteenth century were attracted by his style, which he says he tried to make a thing of "freedom, spirit, and elegance". The 1611 translation of Matthew 5. 17 is: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." For this Harwood wrote:

> Do not think that the design of my coming into the world is to abrogate the law of Moses, and the prophets—I am only come to supply their deficiencies, and to give mankind a more complete and perfect system of morals.

He wove this baroque eighteenth-century prayer to replace "Give us this day our daily bread":

> As thou hast hitherto most mercifully supplied our wants, deny us not the necessaries and conveniences of life, while thou art pleased to continue us in it.

When Bishop Wilberforce rose to make a motion in the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury on 10 February, 1870, he had three things on his mind: the new Bible discoveries, the improved Greek dictionaries and grammars, and the antique language of the 1611 Bible. It was high time, he thought, to correct and improve the Authorised Version. Accordingly, he made a motion that the New Testament be revised. This was amended to include the Old Testament and was quickly passed. When the Province of York was invited to co-operate with Canterbury, it declined, saying that it deplored any change in the text of the Scriptures. Elsewhere the project was received more favourably. Though scholars of the Church of England formed the majority in both the Old and New Testament companies, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregationalist, Methodist, and Unitarian scholars assisted them.

On the morning of 22 January, 1870, the twenty scholars of the New Testament company met in Westminster Abbey and, in preparation for their work, celebrated Holy Communion in the beautiful Henry VII Chapel. Proceeding through the Abbey, past the tomb of Edward the Confessor and the high altar where the kings and queens of England are crowned, past the Poet's Corner and by way of the Great Cloisters, they came to the historic old room in the Deanery where Henry IV died. There beneath tapestries which give to this room its name of Jerusalem Chamber, the revisers began their long labour.

For ten years they worked four days each month from eleven in the morning until six in the evening. The doors of Jerusalem Chamber used to be closed to visitors on those days and to anyone curious enough to ask why, the attendant replied: "The New Testament is sitting, sir."

Unhurriedly these eminent scholars studied each passage, proposed corrections, weighed the evidence for and against each change, and made their decisions. Each day they completed about thirty-five verses. At the same time the Old Testament company met in Westminster Chapter Library and for fourteen years they worked in a similar manner.

The enormous task of printing the Revised Version of the New Testament was completed on 17 May, 1881, by the Oxford and Cambridge presses working at top speed. The Oxford Press had already received advance orders for a million copies and the Cambridge Press nearly as many more. Public interest in this New Testament was greater than for any book ever published. All that day of 17 May wagons and lorries filled with Bibles choked the streets around Paternoster Row in London where the Oxford Press was located. Every London bookseller clamoured for copies and the railway stations and wharves were piled with boxes of Bibles ready to be shipped to every English town and to almost every place in the world where English was spoken.

The first copies of the Revised New Testament reached New York by fast ocean steamer on Friday, 20 May. Subscribers to the Chicago *Tribune* and the Chicago *Times* woke up on the morning of 22 May to find the entire Revised New Testament printed in their Sunday paper. In order to accomplish this feat the 118,000 words of the Gospels, Acts, and Romans were telegraphed to Chicago from New York as soon as the new Bible was received there from England. The remainder of the New Testament in book form reached Chicago on the evening of 21 May in time to be set up in type for the next morning.

Meanwhile, the Old Testament company kept steadily at their longer labour and on 19 May, 1885, the Revised Old Testament was published with the Revised New Testament. The Apocrypha was not completed until ten years later.

At first the revisions were greeted with outcries of protest. Favourite passages had been reworded and time-honoured phrases cut out. Some people went so far as to say that the very word of God had been changed. When the outcries died down people saw that the revision clarified many an obscure passage, and that on the score of correctness the new versions were superior to the beloved Authorised Version. But in the quest for a perfectly faithful translation the revisers had often spoiled the majesty and rhythm of the old sentences. The revisers had not laid hands on the Authorised Version in ignorance of its beauty, for in their preface they paid tribute to its "simplicity, dignity, and power", to "the music of its cadences and the felicities of its rhythm".

Though there can be no question of the superior beauty of the Authorised Version, every serious Bible student consults one of the revised versions. There he finds the old verses of 1611 swept away and the text printed in the paragraphs of modern prose. The footnotes remind him that the translation of many words and phrases is still uncertain and that even the "ancient authorities", such as the Codex Vaticanus, the Sinaiticus, and the Alexandrinus, sometimes disagree. English-speaking people were indeed fortunate to have not only the great literary masterpiece of the Authorised Version, but the outstanding scholarly achievements of the Revised Versions as well. Before long they became heirs of further Bible riches.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

BURIED TREASURE

New Bible Discoveries

Tischendorf's discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus did not end the search for Bible manuscripts nor the enthusiastic hunt for buried treasures of any kind that might shed new light on the Bible.

People did not dream that manuscripts older than the two great codices written before A.D. 350 still survived, for as late as A.D. 303 Emperor Diocletian ordered all Christian churches to be destroyed and all Bibles burned. Scholars considered themselves fortunate to have texts as old as the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus. To be sure, there was a long gap between fourth-century copies and first and second-century originals, but there was little expectation of finding a manuscript to bridge this gap.

Then one day in February, 1892, two ladies arrived by camel at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mount Sinai made famous by Count Tischendorf's discovery. Their native camel drivers must have wondered why two English women had journeyed all the way from Cambridge to Sinai and why they had brought cameras. The ladies were Mrs. Agnes S. Lewis and her twin sister, Mrs. J. Y. Gibson, both students of Oriental languages and, like Tischendorf, in quest of ancient manuscripts. The librarian of the monastery brought out an armful of these from a little chest in a dark closet and carried them into the daylight for the English ladies to examine. Mrs. Lewis was the first to see the palimpsest. It was an unattractive object, grimy and stained, and its pages were stuck together with some greasy substance. The sisters boiled water in a kettle and with great care and patience managed to steam the pages open. The upper writing, dating from about A.D. 697, contained the biographies of women saints. This did not especially interest the two Englishwomen, for in a palimpsest it is, of course, the underneath writing that arouses curiosity. Mrs. Lewis brushed the faintly visible, older writing with hydrosulphide of ammonia and revived the ink enough to see that underneath the saints' lives was a copy of the Gospels in Syriac. As Syriac was one of the first languages into which the New Testament was translated, she thought this palimpsest might prove interesting. Mrs.

Lewis and her sister photographed all its vellum leaves and took their photographs home for careful study.

When the difficult feat of deciphering the underneath writing had been accomplished, scholars were amazed at the unexpected treasure Mrs. Lewis had brought to light. This Syriac copy of the Gospels, though made at about the same time as the Codex Sinaiticus, was derived from a much older Greek text. This was its great importance. By translating the Old Syriac Gospels back into Greek, scholars obtained a Greek text used in the second century, possibly as early as A.D. 150. This text brought them very near to the time when the Gospels were actually written. Scholars believe that of all the manuscripts we now possess the Old Syriac palimpsest of Sinai alone preserves the original reading of some Gospel passages. This ancient Syriac palimpsest may well be one of the most important copies of the Gospels in existence. It forms a bridge between the fourth-century codices and the first-century originals. To-day this book remains in the Convent at Mount Sinai in the mahogany box Mrs. Lewis had made for it and presented to the monks. The box is lined with cedar and has two lids, one of glass through which the contents may be seen without being handled. The words inscribed on its silver label are translated:

> The four Holy Gospels in Syriac. Agnes, the foreigner, has given this casket for the Sacred Scriptures not without gratitude to the famous monks.

It required hydrosulphide of ammonia to bring out the buried writing of the Syriac palimpsest but it took archaeologists' shovels to unearth buried manuscripts. Scholars knew that books made earlier than the two fourth-century vellum codices were papyrus books. Papyrus rots in the dampness or crumbles when exposed to wear and dryness. Was there any place in the East where climatic conditions made the survival of papyrus books a possibility? As early as 1778 Egyptian natives, digging in the hot dry sand near Fayum on the Nile, had come upon some large brown papyrus rolls, which, having no value to them, they had burned! This story of rolls preserved in the Egyptian sands gave a clue to two Oxford men, B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt. In 1897 they made excavations around Oxyrhynchus in Egypt and unearthed an ancient rubbish pile filled with papyri. Enormous interest was aroused when a sheet of hitherto unknown sayings of Jesus was found among these papyri. Besides this third-century document they found a fragment of the Gospel of Matthew from the same period and many other documents to which we shall return later.

The most amazing discovery of all was a torn papyrus sheet unearthed by Grenfell and Hunt in 1920 and sold to the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, England. It is only a tiny fragment containing the five verses of John 18. 31 to 33, 37, 38, but its importance far overshadowed its size. When its handwriting was analysed, experts gave it a date before A.D. 150. This, then, is the oldest known fragment of any part of the New Testament. Its writer might have spoken to men who had seen Jesus. The great age of this fragment silences critics who once tried to prove that the Gospels were late second-century books and therefore unreliable. John's was undoubtedly the last of the Gospels to be written. If copies of it were being made in far-off Egypt before A.D. 150, the book itself was most likely written about A.D. 100. The text of this ancient fragment gives us renewed confidence in the authenticity of our later Bibles, for these verses from John reproduce a text identical with that of later manuscripts. This shows that there was not as much tampering with the text between A.D. 150 and 350 as we had feared.

The most sensational of all Bible discoveries was made by Egyptian natives digging in an old Coptic graveyard near Fayum. They unearthed a quantity of jars containing some well-preserved papyrus books which may once have been part of the library of an ancient religious community in Egypt. Chester Beatty, an American living in England, bought most of these papyri, though some now belong to the University of Michigan and to other owners. When the books were deciphered and their contents announced in 1931, scholars were astonished. Here were three New Testament papyrus codices from the third century. The first codex, though fragmentary, contained the four Gospels and Acts; the second codex contained Paul's Epistles, including Hebrews, but excluding the Pastoral Epistles; the third codex consisted of ten leaves of Revelation.

This was a find of immense importance. Though the sheets are brittle and torn, enough of them remain to give us a good idea of the appearance of the Bibles read by Christian people from A.D. 200 to 250. At this period the Hebrew Scriptures and the classical Greek and Roman books were still being written on papyrus rolls, but Christians evidently preferred to use the new papyrus codex which was a transitional book form between the papyrus roll on one hand and the vellum codex on the other. These New Testament codices show us that though there was no such thing as a one-volume New Testament in the third century, the various New Testament documents were beginning to come together and to form two chief collections: first, the Gospels and Acts; second, the Epistles of Paul. Meanwhile other books, like Revelation, were circulating separately. Not only do these New Testament codices show us one of the stages in the formation of the canon but they also provide us with a Greek text a hundred years older than the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus.

Now, however, we have a Bible manuscript four hundred years older than any of these. It is, of course, a fragment from an Old Testament book, for it was written in the second century B.C. The story of its discovery is a curious one. Egyptian mummies were often encased in a kind of *papier mâché* cartonnage made from torn bits of discarded papyrus rolls. The papyrus fragments were glued together, coated with plaster, and the entire mummy case decorated with painted designs. A few broken pieces of such a cartonnage were purchased by the John Rylands Library. When the papyrus fragments were separated, they were found to be from written rolls of the most famous books of antiquity. One was part of the first book of the *Iliad*. Glued to this was a fragment from a Greek roll of Deuteronomy written about 150 B.C. For scholars the importance of this ancient Bible fragment lies in its text which agrees with that of the Codex Alexandrinus copied more than six hundred years later. Again the reliability of our fourth- and fifth-century codices is demonstrated.

Following a chance discovery by a Bedouin goatherd in 1947, a whole library of ancient texts, including parts of the Old Testament belonging to a monastic community at Qumran, has been discovered in caves overlooking the Dead Sea. One of these manuscripts proved to be a practically complete Hebrew Scroll of Isaiah. This Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah is believed by scholars to have been made about 100 B.C. and it is thus the oldest known Hebrew manuscript of any book of the Bible and also the oldest existing manuscript of the Bible in any language. In 1945 near Nag Hamadi in Egypt, the library of another community was discovered which, like the Dead Sea Scrolls, has kept scholars busily engaged ever since. One of the manuscripts is called the "Gospel according to Thomas" and consists of a collection of sayings of Jesus some of which appear in the canonical Gospels, while some are "unwritten" sayings of Jesus which have been found on other papyri discovered in Egypt. On the other hand some of the sayings are quite new and have never been seen before. It is thought that the original "Gospel of Thomas" may date from as early as A.D. 140.

Lying beneath the dry sands of Egypt or wrapped around a mummy there may be other ancient papyri older than those we have. But if older documents are never found, we now have far more facts about the text of the Bible than any previous generation. We also have a better foundation for the text of the Bible than for any other ancient book. More than 170 papyrus manuscripts of the New Testament have been found, some of them, of course, only fragments. We have over 200 uncial manuscripts and more than 2,400 cursives. No other Greek book exists in so many ancient copies. Moreover, the Bible manuscripts are not as far removed in time from the original writings as are the Greek and Roman classics. The earliest known manuscript of Virgil was written 350 years after his death and this is the best record for any ancient book except the Bible. The oldest Horace manuscript was copied 900 years after his death and the oldest manuscript of Euripides, 1,600 years later. But for the Greek Bible we have the outstanding fifth-century codices; Alexandrinus, Ephraemi, Bezae, and Washingtonianus; the great fourth-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus; the Chester Beatty third- and second-century papyri; the Syriac palimpsest Gospels translated from a second-century Greek text; the second-century John Rylands fragment of John; and finally, the second-century B.C. fragment of Deuteronomy. These are indeed incomparable treasures. They show us that however far back we go we find a Greek text which agrees fundamentally with the text reconstructed by modern scholars from the best manuscripts. It had been feared that some important Christian doctrine or some event in Christ's life might depend upon a reading not included in the earliest texts. But this is not so. The second-century New Testament books agree with the later manuscripts and we can be satisfied with the authenticity of the New Testament. The "title-deeds of our faith" rest on secure foundations.

How well have we translated these title-deeds? Here again the papyri unearthed by Grenfell and Hunt are valuable. The two Oxford scholars found in their rubbish heap masses of non-Biblical papyri including such things as: business accounts, personal letters, wills, receipts, birth notices, leases, and invitations. These discoveries show what everyday life in New Testament days was like, but more important still, they provide samples of the kind of Greek spoken by ordinary people in the first and second centuries. This everyday Greek differed from the language of the classical authors, but, surprisingly enough, it was found to be identical with the Greek of New Testament writers. Scholars used to puzzle over what they called "Biblical Greek" and wonder why Paul, Luke, Matthew, and the others did not employ a more literary language. Now

this problem was solved. The New Testament authors wrote, not in a unique jargon of their own, but in the common spoken language of their day. They were not writing for literary effect but simply to be understood by their contemporaries. These non-Biblical papyri showed scholars how to translate the New Testament more accurately.

Finally we must ask what the recent archaeological discoveries show as to the historical accuracy of the Bible itself. Volumes have been written on this subject, and the ancient sites from Egypt to Mesopotamia have yielded much evidence. Such places as: Tel el-Amarna, Ras Shamra, Ur, Babylon, Jericho, Lachish, Bethshean, Megiddo, Sinai, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth, have been excavated and have disclosed a wealth of written tablets, broken pottery, burned bricks, bones, jewellery, inscriptions, foundation stones, and other remains of antiquity which archaeologists know how to translate into historical facts. While few of these discoveries concern the Bible narratives directly, most of them fill in the background and prove that Bible writers reported their times with a remarkable degree of accuracy. Though they were not primarily historians they usually succeeded in recording ancient facts correctly. Archaeology has not undermined the reliability of the Old and New Testaments. Instead, it has reinforced it. Many of the buried treasures brought to light have been of inestimable value in increasing our understanding of the text, the translation, and the authenticity of the Bible.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

THE BIBLE TO-DAY

A LIVING BOOK

IN the last chapter we wandered through a graveyard of history where writing is buried under other writing, papyrus is hidden beneath the sand, and broken bits of stone and pottery lie among the debris of dead cities. In this limbo of vanished civilisations, where few but scholars come, lie most of the books written between 1200 B.C. and A.D. 150 when the Bible came into being. Here lie Canaanite books, Egyptian literature, the forgotten Aramaic literature, and many a work by Greek and Roman authors. But the Bible is not buried with these, for to-day it is a living Book, entering creatively into modern life. It issues in an endless stream from roaring presses; it speaks over the radio; it is typed on the movie director's script; it is recorded for gramophones; it stands beside the typewriters of modern authors ready to supply them with titles, ideas, phrases, and stories; and finally, it is read and preached and taught in every Christian Church throughout the world. Here, of course, is its most real and effective life. No other ancient literature can boast of such continuing vitality and it is indeed a rare modern book that challenges the Bible's popularity.

By 1961 the entire Bible had been translated into 226 languages or dialects and the New Testament into 281 additional languages, and a single Gospel or other selection into nearly 700 or more making the unbelievable total of 1181 tongues in which some part of the Bible exists. Among the languages added to the immense list of Bible translations in 1961 were Bawm which is spoken in East Pakistan, Diola in Senegal, Ixil in Guatemala, Kyaka in New Guinea. Complete Bibles were published for the first time in Bali, Bambara, Teso, and Sukuma for Africans and Sadan Toradja for Indonesians. There is perhaps in the world to-day no one with the ability to read who cannot find a Bible in his own language.

The Bible in English illustrates the living quality of the Scriptures. Though people agree that the Authorised Version of 1611 is one of the finest works in English prose literature even this stately monument of the Stuart period could not entomb the Bible itself. Translation after translation continued to be made in English as manuscripts with better texts were

discovered, problems in the Greek language were solved, old words died or changed meaning, and new words were born.

The new translations challenged and stimulated modern readers and gave them a better understanding of many an obscure sentence. All too often the matchless phrases of the Authorised Version slide along a well-worn groove in our minds and fail to engage our attention. The new translations cut new channels in men's thinking. What the Bible lost in majesty and power in the new translations, it gained in accuracy, readability, and clarity.

Three of the many new translations proved very popular. In 1902 Dr. Richard Francis Weymouth published his *New Testament in Modern Speech*. This excellent rendering has passed through many editions and has been revised twice. More notable still were Dr. James Moffatt's translations. In 1913 he published his *New Testament: a New Translation*, followed eleven years later by *The Old Testament*. Dr. Moffatt's style was colloquial and he tried to present the Bible in effective, intelligible English. How well he succeeded is indicated by the fact that his New Testament was reprinted seventy times in twenty-five years.

In 1923 Dr. Edgar J. Goodspeed published *The New Testament: an American Translation* to which were added the Old Testament and Apocrypha in 1939, and finally in 1946 came the publication of The American Revised Standard Version of the New Testament, and in 1952 the Old Testament.

More recently in this country the translations by Ronald Knox of the whole Bible and by J. B. Phillips of the New Testament have deservedly proved best sellers, while on an official level the American Revised Standard Version, completed in 1952, will be succeeded by an authoritative New English Bible, of which the New Testament appeared in 1961, the Old Testament and Apocrypha being still in preparation.

The Bible is a Book used in many different ways. Some people would forge it into iron links to chain us to bygone years. Others are content to keep the Bible safely locked up like a hoard of family jewels inherited from a magnificent past. These people know by hearsay the fabulousness of the gems, but they rarely take them from the vault and look at them in the light of day.

For the majority of Christians, however, the Bible is neither an iron chain nor a hoarded treasure. To most of us it is a great river of spiritual reality rising out of Israel's remote past and continuing to flow more deeply and powerfully through succeeding centuries. It is fed by many rushing streams and mighty torrents and into it has flowed the spiritual wisdom and insight of twelve centuries. Countless men have poured their genius into it: David's biographer, the J and E historians, the author of Deuteronomy, the priestly compilers of history, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and all the prophets. Others have made their contributions: the singers, proverb makers, and story-tellers of antiquity, the authors who made Ruth and Jonah live, and the writer who created Job. Finally, the river enters a new reach where its waters flow over unfathomed depths. Here are the inspired writers of the Gospels and Epistles, the men who beheld the glory of the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us.

The long river of the Bible is broad and very deep, and the Spirit of God moves upon the face of its waters. Here men that thirst come to drink of the water of life. The power of its on-rushing current turns many a wheel. It gives direction and continuity to our individual understanding of spiritual things. Following the shores of this river, no man need lose his way in jungles of speculation nor deserts of spiritual dryness. It is like the ancient river that "went out of Eden to water the garden", for it is a river that enriches the soil of our civilisation. The river of the Bible has broadened out, and sometimes its waters seem to rush less vigorously than they once did through the rocky gorges of the Reformation. Though it flows more quietly to-day, the Bible is a deep and unfailing stream. It is for us:

> . . . a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb . . . And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
>
> REVELATION 22. 1, 17

BIBLE READINGS

In addition to the Bible passages quoted or mentioned in the text, the following selections illustrate the history and help to support the theories discussed in Part I and may well be read with it. They offer, however, only a brief taste of the Old Testament and Apocrypha, and it is hoped that the reader will go on from these examples to discover for himself more of the ample riches of the Bible.

No reading list is given for the New Testament as this can easily be read in its entirety.

CHAPTER 3. THE OLDEST WRITINGS IN THE BIBLE

Song of the well	Numbers 21. 17–18
Joshua to the sun and moon	Joshua 10. 12–13
Deborah's ode	Judges 5
Samson's riddles	Judges 14. 14, 18; 15. 16
David's elegy	II Samuel 1. 19–27

CHAPTER 4. THE FATHER OF HISTORY

How Saul became king	I Samuel 9–11
David at the court of Saul	I Samuel 16. 14–23
David's conquest of Jerusalem	II Samuel 5. 6–12
The story of David's reign	II Samuel 9–20
Palace intrigue places Solomon on the throne	I Kings 1. 5–53

CHAPTER 5. THE EPIC OF ISRAEL

The creation and the garden of Eden	Genesis 2. 4–3. 24
Abraham and the promise	Genesis 12. 1–10
Isaac and Rebekah	Genesis 24
Moses hears God speak	Exodus 3. 1–10
Moses strengthens his people	Exodus 14. 10–14

CHAPTER 6. A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ISRAEL

Abraham prepares to sacrifice Isaac	Genesis 22. 1–13
Joseph in Egypt	Genesis 41–45

CHAPTER 7. THE FIRST BOOK OF PROPHECY

Prophecies against the nations	Amos 1. 1–2. 8
Three prophecies against Israel	Amos 3, 4, 5, 6
Amos is expelled from Bethel	Amos 7. 10–17

CHAPTER 8. THE GOLDEN AGE OF PROPHECY

God's love for Israel	Hosea 11. 1–11
Isaiah's vision in the Temple	Isaiah 6

Lament over the nation	Isaiah 1. 2–9
Parable of the vineyard	Isaiah 5. 1–7
Fashionable ladies of Jerusalem	Isaiah 3. 18–24
A vision of the future	Isaiah 11. 1–10
Evils of Micah's day	Micah 3. 8–12
True religion results in peace	Micah 4. 1–7
The prince from Bethlehem	Micah 5. 2–5
A summary of prophetic teaching	Micah 6. 1–8

CHAPTER 9. THE BOOK FOUND IN THE TEMPLE

How the scroll was found	II Kings 22–23. 30
The beginning of the original scroll	Deuteronomy 5
The basic law	Deuteronomy 6. 4–9
Social legislation	Deuteronomy 15. 1–18
Real estate laws	Deuteronomy 19. 14; 22. 8
Health laws	Deuteronomy 24. 8
Humane legislation	Deuteronomy 24. 14–22
Just weights and measures	Deuteronomy 25. 13–16
A summary of the whole document	Deuteronomy 26. 16–19

CHAPTER 10. EDITING ISRAEL'S HISTORY

The fall of Jericho	Joshua 6
Joshua's farewell	Joshua 23
Introduction and conclusion of Gideon's story	Judges 6. 1–18; 8. 32–35
Samuel addresses Israel	I Samuel 12
A summary based on official records of David's reign	II Samuel 8
David's advice to Solomon	I Kings 2. 1–4
King Jehoash passes in review	II Kings 11. 21–12. 21

CHAPTER 11. THE PROPHET TO A DOOMED NATION

How an ancient book was written and soon destroyed	Jeremiah 36
From Jeremiah's confessions	Jeremiah 15. 10–21; 20. 7–15
God shapes history as the potter shapes his clay	Jeremiah 18. 1–11
Jeremiah in danger after his Temple prophecy	Jeremiah 26. 1–19
Yahweh's new covenant with Israel	Jeremiah 31. 27–34

CHAPTER 12. WRITTEN IN EXILE

Ezekiel's vision of the glory of God	Ezekiel 1, 2
The valley of dry bones	Ezekiel 37. 1–14
Ancient seafaring and commerce	Ezekiel 27
Personal responsibility	Ezekiel 18. 19–32
Yahweh, the Good Shepherd	Ezekiel 34. 11–31
A vision of the new Temple	Ezekiel 43
Living laws of the Holiness Code	Leviticus 19. 1–18, 31–37

CHAPTER 13. THE GREATEST OF THE HEBREWS

The song of joyful restoration	Isaiah 35
"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people"	Isaiah 40
"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion"	Isaiah 52
The pinnacle of Israel's religion	Isaiah 53
"Ho, every one that thirsteth"	Isaiah 55

CHAPTER 14. THE CONSTITUTION OF A SPIRITUAL COMMONWEALTH

The story of creation	Genesis 1. 1–2; 4
All races belong to one family	Genesis 10
The story of the Passover	Exodus 12. 1–15
The law concerning the Day of Atonement	Leviticus 16. 29–34

CHAPTER 15. THE MEMOIRS OF A STATESMAN

Jerusalem's walls must be restored	Nehemiah 1, 2
How the building was accomplished	Nehemiah 4
Economic reforms	Nehemiah 5
Plots against Nehemiah	Nehemiah 6
Dedication of the walls	Nehemiah 12. 27–43
Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem	Nehemiah 13. 4–31

CHAPTER 16. BREAKING DOWN RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVENESS

The story of a reluctant missionary	Jonah, entire
Ruth, the Moabite girl who became David's great-grandmother	Ruth, entire

CHAPTER 17. FIRST EDITIONS OF THE BIBLE

A summary of the second-century B.C. Bible	Ecclesiasticus 44–49. 10

CHAPTER 18. AN OLD TESTAMENT MASTERPIECE

The old folk tale	Job 1, 2, 42. 7–17
Job curses the day of his birth	Job 3
An ode to wisdom	Job 28
Job's story of his life	Job 29, 30
The highest moral standards in the Old Testament	Job 31
The Lord speaks	Job 38, 39

CHAPTER 19. WISE MEN OF ISRAEL

In praise of wisdom	Proverbs 3. 13–26
The ideal wife	Proverbs 31. 10–31
The sadness of life	Ecclesiastes 1. 1–11
Life's end	Ecclesiastes 11. 9–12. 8

CHAPTER 20. ISRAEL'S GOLDEN TREASURY

Among the best-loved Psalms are: 8, 19, 23, 24, 27, 42, 46, 51, 67, 84, 90, 91, 95, 96, 100, 107, 121, 122, 125, 126

CHAPTER 21. THE LITERARY HARVEST OF A CENTURY

David prepares to build the Temple	I Chronicles 22. 2–19
How Temple music was organised	I Chronicles 15. 16–28
Is this history or opera?	II Chronicles 20. 14–30
The Temple is rebuilt and Ezra goes to Jerusalem	Ezra 5. 1–7. 10
Mixed marriages	Ezra 9. 5–15; 10. 2–8
How Esra read the Law to the people	Nehemiah 8
A Hebrew love song	Song of Solomon 2. 8–17
Four young men are loyal to their faith	Daniel 1
The furnace does not burn the three youths	Daniel 3
A great feast at which handwriting appears on the wall	Daniel 5
A miracle in the lions' den	Daniel 6
The adventures of a Jewish heroine	Esther, entire

CHAPTER 22. THE BOOKS THAT WERE LEFT OUT

The prayer of Tobit, a pious Jew	Tobit 3. 1–6
Religion or "the fear of the Lord" is wisdom	Ecclesiasticus 1
In praise of famous men	Ecclesiasticus 44. 1–15
Ancient craftsmen who supported "the fabric of the world"	Ecclesiasticus 38. 24–34
Songs of Jerusalem	Baruch 4, 5
A cry of Penitence	Manasses, entire
The reward of righteousness	Wisdom 3. 1–9
The story of Judith	Judith 8–16
A contest between three members of the royal bodyguard	I Esdras 3, 4
Elephants are used in a battle against Judas and his Maccabean patriots	I Maccabees 6. 28–46

INDEX

ABEL, 18
Abiathar, 17, 19, 36, 38f.
Abraham, 7f., 18, 21, 52
Acts, 94–6, 108, 120f.
Aegean Sea, 118
Ahab, 38
Ahasuerus, 78
Ahimaaz, 17
Akiba, Rabbi, 76
Akkadians, 7
Alexander the Great, 105, 118
Alexandria, 81f.
  Library, 81f., 141
Alphabet, 9
Amaziah, 25, 27f., 38
Ammon, 26
Amon, 34
Amos, 5, 25–8, 30, 32f., 36, 38, 53
Anathoth, 41
Antioch, 102, 107, 118, 143
Antioch (Pisidian), 118
Antiochus Epiphanes, 77
Apocalyptic, 77f., 129
Apocrypha, 70, 79–83
Apollos, 124
Apostles, 91, 94–6, 124
Aquila, 97, 117, 119
Aramaic, 97, 100
Archaeology, 170f.
Ark, Incantations to the, 12, 15
Armenian Version, 145f.
Artaxerxes, 55f.
Asa, 38
Asaph, 56
Ascension, 95
Asia Minor, 99, 128f.
Assyria, 7, 34, 41
Athaliah, 38
Athanasius, 134
Augustine, St., 147
Authorised Version, 83, 158f., 163–5, 172
Authorship of Bible, 3–5

BAAL, 9, 37
Babylon, 7, 38, 42f., 49, 52, 55
Babylonia, 8, 10f., 41, 43f., 86
Babylonians, 7, 38
Baptist College, Bristol, 152
Barnabas, 98f., 118, 124
  Epistle of, 134
Baruch, 40f.
  Apocalypse of, 86
  Book of, 80
Bede, 147f.
Bel, 47, 49
  and the Dragon, 80
Belshazzar, 77
Ben Sira, 56, 79
Bethel, 21, 25–7, 31
Bible Society, British and Foreign, 83
"Biblical Greek", 170
Bishops' Bible, 155, 157
Boleyn, Ann, 152
Book of the Wars of the Lord, 15, 19, 36
"Breeches Bible", *see* Geneva Bible

CAEDMON, 147f.
Caesar, 82, 107
Caesarea, 107, 121
Cain, 18
Callimachus, 81
Calvin, John, 156
Canaan, 10, 12, 18
Canaanite-Phoenician alphabet, 9
Canaanites, 7, 9f., 12–14
Canon, New Testament, 133–5
  Old Testament, 39, 63f., 79, 86
Capernaum, 100
Cartonnage, mummy, 169
Catacombs, 83
Chaldean Empire, *see* Babylonia
Charles I, 160
Chaucer, Geoffrey, 148
Chester Beatty papyri, 168f.

China, 145f.
Chloe, 119
Christianity, 89–92, 105f., 139
Chronicler, the, 57, 75–8, 80
Chronicles, I and II, 75–8
  of the Temple, 37
Cicero, 143
Classical Greek MSS., 169
Clement, Epistle of, 134
Cochlaeus, Johannes, 151
Codex Alexandrinus, 160, 169
  Argenteus, 145
  Bezae, 169
  Ephraemi, 169
  Sinaiticus, 142, 161f., 166, 169
  Vaticanus, 142, 160f., 166, 169
  Washingtonianus, 169
Colossians, Epistle to the, 121, 125
Confucius, 69
Constantine, 142f., 160f.
Coptic Version, 145
Corinth, 93, 117f., 120
Corinthians, First Epistle to the, 96, 119
  Second Epistle to the, 120
Coverdale, Miles, 155f.
Creation, 18
Cyprus, 99
Cyrus, 48, 52

DAMASCUS, 26, 93, 96, 116, 119
Damasus, Pope, 143f.
Daniel, 75, 77f., 80, 129
  Additions to the Book of, 80
David, 5, 7, 14–17, 39, 59f., 72, 75f.
  Lament of, 14f.
Deborah, Ode of, 13–15, 39
Derbe, 119
Deuteronomy, 5, 8, 34–7, 44f., 47, 53, 62f., 84
Diatessaron, 145
Didaché, 134
Diocletian, 166
Dispersion, Jewish, 7, 81, 85
Domitian, 124, 128

ECCLESIASTES, 70, 75
Ecclesiasticus, 56f., 70, 72, 79f.

E document, 21–4, 36, 38, 47, 62f.
  combined with J, 22–4, 62
  compared with J, 22
Eden, 8, 18
Edom, 66
Egypt, 7–11, 81, 85
Egyptians, 7, 9, 11f., 17
Elihu, 66f.
Elijah, 37
Elisha, 37
Elohim, 21
Emmaus, 91
Enoch, Book of, 80
Epaphroditus, 121
Ephesus, 113, 119, 121, 129
Ephraim, 21, 31
Erasmus, 119, 150, 155
Esdras, I and II, 79f.
Esther, 75, 78, 80
  Rest of the Book of, 80
Ethiopic Version, 145f.
Eumenes II, 141
Euphrates, 7–9
Exodus, 9, 12
Eye-witness testimony, 93–6, 98–101
Ezekiel, 31, 43–7, 52f., 55
Ezra, 75

FAITH, 119f., 124f.
Festal Letter (of Athanasius), 134

GALATIA, 119
Galatians, Epistle to the, 118, 141
Gaul, 120, 145
Genesis, 3, 5, 8, 53
Geneva Bible, 155–7
Gentiles, 85, 119f.
Gerizim, 64, 84
Geshem, 56
Gethsemane, 93, 99–101
Gibson, Mrs. J. Y., 166f.
Gilboa, Mount, 14, 16
Glastonbury, 147
God, 9f., 26–8, 30–2, 42, 45, 47f., 53, 63, 72
Golgotha, 89, 91

Goliath, 16
Gomer, 30f.
Goodspeed, E. J., 173
Gospel, oral, 93–7
Gothic Version, 145
Grail, the Holy, 147
Great Bible, 155f.
Greece, 7, 9, 105, 118
Greeks, 9
Gregory, Pope, 147
Grenfell, B. P., 167f., 170
Gutenberg, Johannes, 144

HABAKKUK, 64
Haggai, 3, 55
Hammurabi, 8
Hampton Court Conference, 158
Hanging Gardens, 43
Harwood, Edward, 163
Hasidim, 77
"He" Bible, 159
Hebrew Bible, 81–6
Hebrews, Epistle to the, 124f., 129, 134
Henry VIII, 151, 155f.
Hermas, Shepherd of, 134
Herodotus, 16
Hezekiah, 33, 38, 47
Hieroglyphic, 9
Hilda, Abbess, 147
Hinnom, 34f.
History, 11, 64
Hittites, 7, 17
Holbein, Hans, 156
Holiness Code, 45–7, 53, 62
Hosea, 5, 30f., 33, 36
Hoshea, 38
Hunt, A. S., 167f., 170
Hymn-books, Christian, 97
  Temple, 72–4

ICONIUM, 118
Iliad, 169
Illuminated Bibles, 3
Isaac, 7, 21, 52
Isaiah, 5, 31–3, 36, 47
  Martyrdom of, 80
  Second, 45, 47–53, 55, 57f., 73
  Third, 50f.

Israel as God's Servant, 49–51
  the Northern Kingdom of, 7, 16
  Religion of, 10f., 44, 49f., 52, 54, 58
Italy, 120

J DOCUMENT, 18–20, 36, 38, 47, 62, 64, 84
  combined with E, 22–4, 62
  compared with E, 22
Jacob, 7, 52
Jael, 14
James I, 155, 158
James, Epistle of, 124, 126
Jamnia, 79, 82, 86
Jasher, Book of, 15, 19, 36
Jehoiakim, 40f., 43
Jehoshaphat, 38
Jehu, 38
Jephthah, 39
Jeremiah, 5, 31, 33, 40–4
Jeroboam, 38
Jeroboam II, 25, 28, 38, 58
Jerome, 83, 142–4
Jerusalem, 7, 16, 43, 52, 56f., 89f., 94, 99, 102, 108, 120, 124
  Chamber, 164
  the New, 130f.
Jesus, 31, 51, 89f., 102, 111
Jews, 6–11, 44f., 49f., 77, 105, 108, 120f., 129
Jezebel, 38
Johanan ben Zakkai, 82, 86
John, Gospel of, 112–15
  the Elder, 113–15, 132
Jonah, 58f., 65
Jonathan, 14
Joseph, 8, 18f., 21, 23f.
  of Arimathaea, 147
Joshua, Book of, 38
  Command of, 14f.
Josiah, 34–6, 38, 84
Jotham, 38
Jubilees, Book of, 80
Judah, the Southern Kingdom of, 7, 32, 42, 55f.
Judaism, 45, 54, 57, 63, 65, 84–6, 119, 125

Judas, 102
Jude, Epistle of, 124, 126f.
Judges, Book of, 18, 38f.
  period of, 12, 18, 59
Judith, 80, 83

KENITES, 10
Kingdom, the Founding of the, 16–18, 21, 36, 38f.
Kings, I and II, 37f.
Kings of Israel, History of the, 37
Kings of Judah, History of the, 37
Knox, John, 156

LAMENTATIONS, 44
Laodicea, 122, 129
Last Supper, 99, 119, 147
Law, the, 61–3, 84, 119
Laws, in Holiness Code, 45–7
  in Priestly Code, 54
Leviticus, 11, 45f., 54
Lewis, Mrs. Agnes S., 166f.
Logos, 121
Lollards, 149
Love, 46
Lucaris, Cyril, 160
Luke, 97, 106–8, 124
  Gospel of, 95, 105–12, 133
Luke-Acts, 105–8
Luther, Martin, 71
Lystra, 118

MACCABEAN REVOLT, 77f.
Maccabees, I and II, 80, 83
Macedonia, 118, 120
Malachi, 54, 64
Manasseh, 34, 38
Manasses, Prayer of, 80
Marco Polo, 145
Mark, Gospel of, 93, 95, 98–101, 107, 109–12, 114, 127
  John, 98–101
Martin, Gregory, 157
Mary, mother of Jesus, 89f., 108
  mother of John Mark, 99
Mary Magdalene, 91

Matthew, Gospel of, 95, 101–4, 109–12
  the Apostle, 97, 103f., 107
  the author, 102–4
  Bible, 155f.
Megiddo, 13
Mercy, 31
Messiah, 89f., 116
Micah, 33, 36
Miletus, 128
Miriam, Song of Victory of, 12, 15
Moab, 26, 59
Moffatt, James, vii, 173
Molech, 34
Monotheism, 72
Moresheth, 33
Moses, 62f., 65
Music, Temple, 72

NABLUS, 84
Nahum, 64
Nebo, 47, 49
Nebuchadnezzar, 54–7, 59, 61
Nero, 85, 98, 124, 131
Nestorian Churches, 145
Nicholas of Hereford, 148
Nile, 7–9
Noah, 8, 18; Blessing of, 14
Numbers, 13, 54

OBADIAH, 64
Obed, 59
Omri, 38
Onesimus, 122, 129
Oxyrhynchus Papyri, 167f., 170

PALESTINE, 7, 9, 52
Palimpsest, 166f.
Papias, 99f., 103, 111
Papyrus, 8, 85, 139
Parchment, 141f.
Parker, Matthew, 157
Passover, 71f.
Patmos, 128, 132
Patriarchs, 7, 18f.
Paul, 82, 85, 93, 96–9, 107f., 113, 116–24, 129, 133
  Epistles of, 94, 116–23, 129, 133

Pentateuch, 5, 62f., 102
Pergamos, 129
Persecution, 124f., 128f., 131
Persia, 7, 48, 52, 55f.
Persian Gulf, 8, 55
Peter, 89, 91, 94f., 98, 100, 102, 104, 113, 124f., 127
  First Epistle of, 124f., 127, 129
  Second Epistle of, 122, 124, 127, 133
  Gospel of, 110
Philadelphia, 129
Philemon, 121f., 129
Philip the Apostle, 147
  the Deacon, 107, 124
Philippi, 107
Philippians, Epistle to the, 121
Philistines, 7, 14, 16
Phoenicians, 7, 9f.
Pilate, 90, 102
Prayer, 71–4, 124
Priestly Code, 52–4, 61–3
Priscilla, 97, 117, 119, 124
Prophecy, 28
  compared with apocalyptic, 77f.
Prophets, 10, 29f., 45, 53, 61, 63f.
Proverbs, 5, 69f.
Psalms, 3, 5, 64, 71–4
Pseudepigrapha, 79–81
Ptolemy, 81, 141
Publishing, ancient, 140, 142
Purim, 78
Puritans, 83, 158

QUELLE, 111f.
Quentel, Peter, 151

RAMESES II, 9
Ras Shamra, 10
Rehoboam, 38
Religious History of Israel, 21–4, 36–9
Resurrection, 91, 95, 119
Revelation, Book of, 78, 128–32
Revised Version, 163–5
Reynolds, John, 158
Rheims-Douay Bible, 83, 155, 157
Righteousness, 29f., 120

Romans, Epistle to the, 120f.
Rome, 7, 81, 83, 85, 98f., 105, 120, 130f.
Ruth, 3, 58–60, 65

SAMARIA, 56
Samaritan Bible, 63f., 84f.
Sampson, 39
Samuel, I and II, 16f., 38f.
Sanballat, 56
Sardis, 129
Saul, 7, 14, 16, 39
Scribes, 61, 84f., 140
Scriptorium, 142
Semites, 7
Septuagint, 81f., 85, 145, 161
Sermon on the Mount, 102f.
Shakespeare, 3, 19
Shaphan, 34f.
Shechem, 84
Silas, 107, 117f.
Sinai, Mount, 12
Sisera, 13f.
Slavery, 122
Smyrna, 129
Solomon, 5, 7, 16, 38, 76
  records of reign of, 37
  Song of, 75f.
  Wisdom of, 70, 80
Song of the Three Children, 80
  of the Well, 14
Spain, 120
Stephen, 107
Streeter, B. H., 126*n.*
Suffering, 65–8, 73
Susa, 55
Susanna, 80
Synoptic Gospels, 109–12
Syriac Gospels, 167, 170

TACITUS, 90
Tarsus, 116
Tatian, 145
Tekoa, 32
Temple of Jerusalem, 7, 32, 34f., 38, 40, 42f., 47, 55, 57f., 72f., 75
  Library of, 52f., 61
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 80

Textual Criticism, 141
Theophilus, 106
Thessalonians, First Epistle to the, 93, 97, 117f., 133
Thessalonica, 117f.
Thomas, 91
Thyatira, 129
Tiberius, 90
Tigris-Euphrates, 8
Timothy, 107, 117f.
  First Epistle to, 107
  Second Epistle to, 123
Tischendorf, 161f., 166
Titus, 86, 102
Tobiah, 56
Tobit, 80, 83
Tophet, 34
Trajan, 126
Tychicus, 121f.
Tyndale, William, 150-4, 157

ULFILAS, 145
Upsala, 145
Ur, 8
Uzziah, 32

VATICAN, Library of, 160
Vellum, 142
Vespasian, 85f.
Victoria, Queen, 59
Vilvorden, 152
Vulgate, 143f., 147, 150

WESLEY, JOHN, 163
Westminster Abbey, 164
Weymouth, Richard Francis, 173
Whittingham, William, 156
Wilberforce, Bishop, 164
Writings, the, 64
Wycliffe, John, 145, 148f.

XERXES, 78

YAHWEH, 9f., 12, 19, 26-8, 48, 52f., 76

ZECHARIAH, 55
Zeus, 77